

The Silence of the Lambs Study Guide

The Silence of the Lambs by Thomas Harris

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Plot Summary

The Silence of the Lambs is author Thomas Harris' third book, and the second in a trilogy of books devoted to the FBI's hunt for serial killers. Since the advent of FBI criminal profiling, Harris' works are among the most popular works of fiction dedicated to this subject. *The Silence of the Lambs* is Harris' most famous work, and has also been turned into a blockbuster movie starring Anthony Hopkins as serial killer, Dr. Hannibal Lecter. In this book, Lecter's character is the antagonist to the main character, FBI trainee Clarice Starling. Starling must walk a delicate line in negotiating with the slippery Lecter, hoping to obtain his help in catching another serial killer, nicknamed "Buffalo Bill," because he skins his female victims.

Starling is plucked out of the FBI Academy by her mentor, Jack Crawford, to track down Buffalo Bill before he kills again. The novel takes Clarice on a journey from Lecter's dank cell in the bowels of the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane to the slab where Buffalo Bill's latest body lies. The pressure intensifies when Bill kidnaps the daughter of U.S. Senator Ruth Martin. As the only female assigned to the investigation, Starling is able to use her feminine perspective to understand Bill's victims, and how he selects them. However, each day she spends on his trail puts Starling in greater danger of being flunked out of the academy, and not even Crawford can prevent this from happening. In the end, Starling rises to the occasion, and the green trainee single-handedly tracks down Buffalo Bill. She must then descend into the horrifying basement dungeon, where he traps his victims, to save Catherine Martin.



Chapters 1 - 5

Chapters 1 - 5 Summary

Chapter 1: FBI trainee Clarice Starling is called away from firing range practice to see Jack Crawford in his office. Crawford is Section Chief of the Behavioral Sciences department, headquartered in a subterranean level of the FBI Academy building in Quantico, West Virginia. The puffy shadows under Crawford's eyes testify to the pressure he is under to catch the serial killer, Buffalo Bill. Crawford had been instrumental in recruiting Starling to the FBI Academy, but he has ignored her ever since, and "she had written Crawford off as a two-faced recruiting sergeant son of a bitch." (pg. 2) Grudgingly, she finds herself liking him again, as he offers her an opportunity to participate in a psychological evaluation of an infamous serial killer named Hannibal Lecter, or "Hannibal the Cannibal," as he's known in the press. Crawford warns her that Dr. Lecter, a psychiatrist, likes to play mind games with law enforcement. He once made a fool of the hospital director, Dr. Chilton, in a published article. Crawford also warns Starling not to deviate from the safety procedures which Dr. Chilton will brief her on. He concludes by promising Starling that the FBI Director will see her report over her name if she does well.

Chapter 2: The moment fifty-eight-year-old Chilton sees Clarice Starling, he begins hitting on her. When she shoots him down, Chilton decides he has no more time for Starling. He briefs her on the way down to Lecter's cell in the bowels of the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. Chilton admonishes Starling not to reach through the bars or to come in contact with Lecter in any way. She is to pass him soft paper only, through the sliding door attached to his cell. The paper must be free of staples and paper clips, and she cannot give him either a pen or pencil. Chilton irritates Starling by suggesting that Jack Crawford's motive for sending her is to entice Lecter with a beautiful young woman. When they reach the cell block, Starling asks to go in alone. Chilton, annoyed, turns Starling over to an orderly named Barney. Barney reminds her of the rules, and gives her Lecter's mail to get her off on the right foot with the prisoner. Lecter's cell is at the end of a long corridor lined with prison cells. As she traverses the corridor, one of the prisoners hisses at her, "I can smell your cunt." (pg. 14)

Chapter 3: Starling finds Lecter behind a double barrier of prison bars and a stout nylon net. She introduces herself and politely asks to speak with him. Lecter is small and sleek, but strong, and has six fingers on his left hand. He asks to see her credentials. When he notices her ID card says "trainee," he is offended that Jack Crawford would send a trainee to interview him. Nevertheless, Lecter asks Barney to bring her a chair. Once she is seated, Lecter asks what the prisoner, Miggs, had said to her. Starling quotes Miggs' remark, "I can smell your cunt." (pg. 18) Lecter assures her that he himself cannot, but wants to know how she feels about Miggs' remark. She is unperturbed by Miggs' hostility. She redirects the conversation to the psychological questionnaire she hopes Lecter will fill out. He responds with scorn. Lecter tells her that



she got off on the right foot by being "courteous and receptive to courtesy," and by establishing trust with the ugly truth about Miggs (pg. 19). However, he thinks her segue to the questionnaire was clumsy, and he insults the infantile psychological techniques of the FBI's Behavioral Science department.

Starling tries to get back in his good graces by complimenting several articles Lecter has written for the psychological journals. Lecter asks if she's working up to asking about Buffalo Bill. Starling assures him that she is not seeking information on Buffalo Bill, but Lecter presses the issue. He asks why the newspapers refer to him as Buffalo Bill. Starling admits that the name is a bad joke, given to the killer, because he "skins his humps." (pg. 21) Such attempts to win Lecter's trust make Starling feel cheap. Lecter returns the questionnaire through the drawer, saying that it is too blunt an instrument to dissect his psyche. He turns his laser-like perception on Starling, calling her a cheap redneck, one generation out of the mines. He divines that her greatest fear is to be considered common. He offers to send her a valentine that she will really like and then ends the interview. Drained, Starling heads back down the corridor in defeat. As she walks by Miggs' cell, the insane prisoner throws a handful of semen in her face. Horrified, Lecter calls her back. Miggs' discourtesy is unspeakable to Lecter. As if to make up for the nasty incident, Lecter offers her information which he says could lead to her advancement. Lecter tells Starling to look in Raspail's car for her valentine, and then he sends her away.

Chapter 4: Starling sits in her Pinto, parked across the street from the hospital, and gathers her thoughts. Some of Lecter's remarks hit close to home; and his comments about her parents are infuriating. She recalls the name Raspail. He had been a patient of Lecter's, and one of his victims. Starling considers her options. She needs more information, but Crawford is unavailable, and she knows if she goes to the Baltimore Police for help they will take the case away from her. Instead, she returns to Quantico, where she accesses microfilm on Lecter.

Starling discovers that Benjamin Raspail was a flutist for the Baltimore Philharmonic. In March of 1975, he failed to show up for a performance. Raspail's body was discovered a few days later, seated in a church pew in rural Virginia. He was missing two vital organs, the thymus and pancreas. Starling's background in meat processing tells her that these organs are known as the "sweetbreads." Lecter had later served these items at a dinner he held for the conductor of the Philharmonic. Raspail was Lecter's ninth known victim. He died intestate, and his squabbling relatives are still holding up probate. They have successfully petitioned to have Lecter's patient files on Raspail returned to them. Starling decides to contact Raspail's attorney, Everett Yow, to get at the car. She calls Crawford for authorization. Crawford merely repeats his instructions for her to turn in her report at nine a.m. Sunday and disconnects the call. Starling retires to the room she shares with her African-American roommate, Ardelia Mapp, and works on her report.

Chapter 5: Jack Crawford keeps vigil next to his dying wife's bed. It has been two days since she has moved or spoken. Alert to her every sound, Crawford rises to take her blood pressure when she skips a breath. He has put effort into making the bedroom



looks as normal as possible despite the presence of two hospital beds, pushed close together so he can sleep next to Bella. He keeps watch over her, ashamed to be grateful for his own good health.

Chapters 1 - 5 Analysis

The author packs a great deal of exposition into each brief chapter. Thomas Harris is known as a very careful writer who chooses his words deliberately, as does the novel's antagonist, Hannibal Lecter. The author must convey great detail with his prose, as the novel delves into the background and psyche of not one, but two serial killers. Both Hannibal Lecter and James Gumb's psyches will be explored in gruesome detail. Additionally, the relationship between Section Chief Jack Crawford and agent-in-training Clarice Starling is explored psychologically. Having chosen a young female agent to be his protagonist, the author centers the novel on the gender dynamics this creates. Harris creates empathy for Starling's character, and her desire to be accepted by those in power is established from the outset. Dr. Lecter's character has a nasty habit of voicing people's worst fears. This allows the author to emphasize the darker sides of his characters' psyches, which makes for a well-rounded and thoughtful reading experience.

While the scenes with Lecter are show-stoppers, the real meat of this section lies in the development of Starling's relationship with Crawford. The FBI is a man's world, and yet Starling's ambition and goals drive her to a career in Behavioral Science, for which she is, as the reader will learn, quite qualified. What Starling hopes for, and needs desperately in order to succeed, is the easy acceptance that promising young male candidates find from organizations such as the FBI. She needs a strong leader she can trust and follow, one who takes an interest in her development and helps her along the way. Without this type of assistance, no one can succeed in this demanding profession. Having been recruited by Crawford but later ignored by him, Starling is confused and fears she will not be accepted by the power structure due to her gender. When Crawford selects her for this assignment, Starling is elated, yet still cautious because of his hot and cold temperament. She has not yet learned of his wife's illness, and probably assumes that his distant manner reflects skepticism of a woman's ability to do the job. To further complicate matters for Starling, ignorant people like Dr. Chilton assume her relationship with Crawford is romantic in nature. Even Lecter plants a seed of doubt in her mind as to Crawford's motives. She must fight for acceptance from the FBI's leadership while either combating or ignoring such wrongheaded assumptions about her own motivation.



Chapters 6 - 10

Chapters 6 - 10 Summary

Chapter 6: Monday morning, Starling receives a positive reply from Crawford regarding her report. He gives her permission to go after Raspail's car, but on her own time; and she is to check with him before contacting the Raspail estate. Starling feels certain any eight-year-old evidence in Raspail's car has long since lost its value, but she appreciates Crawford allowing her to run down the lead. Given her hectic class schedule, Starling has little time to work on it. During Monday's lunch period and study break, she calls the Baltimore County Courthouse to get the probate records on Raspail's estate. A clerk confirms that Raspail's car was sold and provides the name of the subsequent owner. However, the car has been resold.

Tuesday, she learns that the Maryland Department of Motor Vehicles cannot trace a vehicle by serial number, which is all she has. During Tuesday's fire arm instruction, Starling demonstrates superior hand strength by pulling the trigger ninety times in a minute. She also thinks to ask her instructor, John Brigham, how to trace a vehicle by serial number. Brigham's advice pays off, and she finds the last known owner of Raspail's vehicle. Unfortunately, the car has been squashed into a cube. At a dead end, Starling wants more information from Lecter, but can't get past Chilton's secretary.

Chapter 7: Crawford grills Starling about her interview with Lecter. Miggs has been found dead, having swallowed his own tongue, apparently at Lecter's suggestion. Chilton is complaining about Starling, however Crawford defends Starling's professionalism. Nonetheless, Crawford wants to make sure nothing else happened in the interview with Lecter that she omitted from the report. Starling insists the report is a near-verbatim account of what transpired. Satisfied, Crawford asks about her progress on Raspail's car. Starling tells him the lead didn't pan out, but Crawford asks why she assumes Raspail had only one car. He informs her that Raspail collected cars, and tells her to ask Raspail's lawyer for permission to search any cars remaining in the estate. Starling leaves, and Crawford returns to his examination of a note he has received from Hannibal Lecter. The note expresses condolences for Crawford's sick wife, Bella.

Chapter 8: Starling follows Everett Yow to the self-storage unit where Raspail's belongings, including a classic Packard, are kept. Yow has agreed to allow Starling access to the car without a search warrant. Starling has been issued temporary credentials and needs to make the most of this lead before her credentials expire. In the dark and rain, Yow examines the notary seal on the storage unit door and confirms that the unit has not been disturbed in five years. Yow explains that the Packard had already been in storage, under a cover, when Yow arranged to add the remainder of Raspail's personal belongings to the storage unit. The locks are frozen shut, and Yow suggests they return another time. However, Starling knows if she doesn't get in now, she won't have another chance. Resourcefully, she opens the locks with some de-icer and oil from her car, but then the rollup door gets stuck inches from the ground. Starling takes the



jacks from both her car and Yow's and slides up the door a few more inches. Before she shimmies her way in under the door, Starling instructs Yow to call for backup, in case she becomes trapped.

Inside the storage unit, Starling moves cautiously through the tightly-packed maze of cobwebs, boxes, and mice which make eerie sounds in the darkness. She rearranges several stacks of boxes to gain entry to the Packard. As Lecter promised, she finds valentines in the back seat. The valentines are arranged in a tableau next to what appears to be a man, sitting in the car. Starling thinks quickly: She knows she must confirm whether the man is an actual corpse before she calls for backup, but she must be careful not to destroy any evidence. With flashlight and camera, she takes several pictures before easing into the vehicle, where she discovers that the man is a mannequin. Where the mannequin's head should be is a jar containing a real human head. Starling prides herself on her calm response, as she exits the storage unit and calls for backup. The press shows up before the Baltimore P.D. The female anchor distracts Starling while the male cameramen try to sneak under the jacked up storage door. Alone, young, and without backup, Starling is forced to threaten the men with the jack handle to keep them at bay. That night, the news broadcasts images of her smacking the roll up door with the jack handle.

Chapter 9: By the time Starling arrives at Lecter's cell, the Baltimore Police have already spent hours grilling him. In response, Lecter has made an origami chicken out of folded paper, which he presents to the infuriated senior officer. Rain-soaked, Starling accepts the towel which Lecter sends her through the sliding drawer in his cell. Lecter tells Starling that he did not kill the man in the car, whom he identifies as Klaus. Raspail had told Lecter, in therapy, that he killed Klaus, because Klaus had been unfaithful. However, Lecter suggests that the death was really a result of accidental erotic asphyxiation. Lecter then killed Raspail, because the whiny Raspail was making no progress in his therapy. Lecter asks to use Starling's first name, Clarice. He then asks Clarice how she felt when she found the dead body, and if she has inappropriate feelings for Crawford. Lecter tells Starling he wants to propose a trade with Jack Crawford. Lecter is willing to help Crawford catch Buffalo Bill in return for a cell with a view. To prove his knowledge of Buffalo Bill, Lecter informs Starling that Buffalo Bill lives in a two-story house, and will soon begin scalping his victims. Then, Lecter turns out his light and leaves Starling in silence.

Chapter 10: Starling has not heard a word from Crawford or the Baltimore Police since her televised scuffle with the cameramen at the storage facility. She is certain she's in trouble, but hopes for a chance to defend herself. This morning, she is called out of class by Brigham, her gunnery instructor. Afraid she will be thrown out of the academy, Starling is instead issued a gun, Brigham's own in fact, and told to pack an overnight bag and meet Crawford at the Quantico airstrip. On the way, Brigham informs her that Crawford has stood up for her in the wake of her scuffle with the cameramen. Crawford has arranged for Starling to accompany him to fingerprint Buffalo Bill's latest "floater." Floater is a term for a dead body found in the water. Fingerprinting them is nasty work, and thus anyone in the Bureau who hears about this assignment will think Starling's been suitably punished. At the same time, Crawford is giving her an opportunity to work



on the Buffalo Bill case. Brigham admires Crawford's subtlety and leadership, and explains to Starling about Crawford's wife, Bella. He wishes Starling well, and turns her over to Crawford, waiting on board the "Blue Canoe," as the FBI private plane is affectionately termed. Crawford hands her the Buffalo Bill case file and tells her to start reading.

Chapters 6 - 10 Analysis

This section of the novel is a test for Starling. The only piece of viable information she has obtained from Lecter in their first meeting has to do with Raspail's car. Starling doubts Lecter's tip will yield anything of substance, but it's all she has, and she wants to pursue it for all it's worth. Crawford's initially ignores her request, making her even hungrier to prove herself. Thus, when he eventually does allow her to pursue the car lead, she is grateful to him for "giving her an exhausted mouse to bat around for practice." (pg. 32) It is not the quality of the lead which inspires her hopes, but rather the simple fact that Crawford wants to teach her. Crawford represents the professional acceptance she craves from the male-dominated FBI. Starling is put to the test in Raspail's storage unit; alone and with no visible signs of authority, she nevertheless secures the crime scene. Crawford's subsequent defense of her actions secures her loyalty to him. When Starling learns about his dying wife, Bella, she suddenly understands why Crawford has been so distant. Grief, not chauvinism, is responsible for his having ignored her career for so long. He rewards her good work in this chapter with the opportunity to work on the highest profile serial killer case in the country. Starling's loyalty to Crawford is now unshakeable.



Chapters 11 - 15

Chapters 11 - 15 Summary

Chapter 11: Buffalo Bill has five known victims. As Starling reads his file, she learns that he abducts women, keeps them alive for a week, and then kills them, skins them, and dumps their bodies in the river. Each victim has been found in a different state. Starling looks at the photographs of the dead bodies and resolves to do all she can to help catch the killer. Crawford and his men are the best at catching serial killers. Starling notices the look in Crawford's eye; he is on the hunt. Crawford pulls out a map and shows Starling where this latest body has been found, just south of Louisville, Kentucky. They discuss her qualifications for printing floaters, and the lack pattern in the killer's dump sites. Crawford shares his wisdom and experience with Starling, who sees what a great leader he is. She realizes that he had probably planned to use her on this case for some time, but had ignored her so she would be hungry for an opportunity.

Chapter 12: Starling rides in the backseat of a sheriff's cruiser, as she and Crawford head for the Potter Funeral Home, where the latest body is waiting to be processed. As they pull up to the funeral home, Starling realizes she is at home in this rural atmosphere. She knows the hardship that these small town policemen know, for they are men much like her father. Crawford and the driver exit the car, leaving Starling stuck in a back seat with no interior door handles. She is forced to knock on the glass until the driver lets her out. The lawmen make lewd comments about Starling, as she passes them.

Inside, the deputies all crowd around the sheriff and Crawford. Crawford looks at Starling, and then tells the Sheriff they should discuss the details of the sex crime man-to-man. The Sheriff agrees to speak with him privately, leaving Starling to hide her embarrassment in front of the group of men. Minutes later, the men return, and everyone packs into an embalming room, where the body awaits. Crawford makes no effort to clear the room, so Starling speaks up in the shared language of their country roots. She thanks the men for bringing the victim this far, and asks them to clear out, so she can do what needs to be done. "Crawford saw that in this place Starling was heir to the granny women, to the wise women, the herb healers, the stalwart country women who have always done the needful, who keep the watch and when the watch is over, wash and dress the country dead." (pg. 82)

The deputies respectfully exit the room, and Crawford hands around the Vicks VapoRub to mask the smell of the body. The girl has been skinned from just below the breasts to just above the knees. Starling points out that she has been scalped, just as Lecter predicted. Starling notices multiple ear piercings and glitter nail polish. She suggests the girl lived in town. The girl is overweight, but had taken care of her best asset, her skin. Cause of death is a gunshot wound to the chest. As Starling photographs the teeth for identification, she finds a bug cocoon deep inside the throat; it appears to have been placed there intentionally. They roll the body over so Starling can take fingerprints, and



they see that two triangular slices of skin have been removed from the shoulders. The prints and photos are immediately faxed to police nationwide. Starling admires Crawford's leadership facility, as he enlists the needed cooperation from the local policemen before they leave.

Chapter 13: After nine hours of working the riverbank with the West Virginia troopers, Crawford and Starling arrive back in Virginia. Crawford instructs his driver, Jeff, to drop him off at the crime lab and take Starling to the Smithsonian with the bug cocoon. On the way, Crawford drills Starling on the best way to post information to the national hotline. As they review the crime details, Starling wonders how Lecter could predict that Buffalo Bill would scalp his victims. Crawford says the newspapers have repeatedly reported that Buffalo Bill doesn't take scalps, therefore it was only a matter of time before the killer decided to prove them wrong. Lecter had merely made a good guess. He also downplays Lecter's clue that Buffalo Bill lives in a two-story house. According to Crawford, that is easy to deduce, because the killer hangs his victims. Hanging another person is extremely difficult if the person realizes they are going to be hung. Fooling a victim into walking up the stairs, and then surprising the victim with a noose, is the most practical way to accomplishing a hanging.

When the FBI sedan arrives at Crawford's destination, he asks Starling to step out and speak to him privately for a moment. "'When I told that deputy he and I shouldn't talk in front of a woman, that burned you, didn't it?'" (pg. 95) Crawford explains that he had only wanted to get the officer alone, away from the crowd of men. Starling holds her ground, explaining that others look to Crawford to see how to act in front of a woman agent. Crawford takes her point. As he walks away, Starling realizes that she has such admiration for her boss that she would kill for him.

Chapter 14: In the Entomology department of the Smithsonian, Starling finds two bug experts playing chess with a rhinoceros beetle. Both Noble Pilcher and Albert Roden are intelligent and cooperative, and both have a sense of humor. Roden's sense of humor is rude and not to Starling's liking. She gets along better with Pilcher, who offers to take her out for dinner when the case is solved. Pilcher and Roden are excited to be involved in the Buffalo Bill homicide, even if it means working all-nighters to identify the insect in time. Starling tells them all the details she can, and they quickly give her some general information on the bug cocoon, which turns out to be *Erebus odora*, a Black Witch Moth. A discussion of the moth's breeding habits raises the likelihood that this one was raised in captivity. Pilcher offers to get Starling copies of the trade magazines, where a hobbyist would go to order breeding supplies. Pilcher explains that the word *moth* was once a verb meaning *destruction*. He then mentions a kind of moth which gains its nutrients from human tears. Starling thinks she is hunting something which lives off tears.

Chapter 15: In Memphis, Tennessee, Catherine Baker Martin and her boyfriend watch the late movie, while smoking a bong filled with hashish in his apartment. Catherine is not quite overweight, but she is a large woman with big bones and a large frame. She decides to run over to her apartment to get some popcorn. As she crosses the foggy parking lot to her front door, she notices a man struggling to load an armchair onto a



truck. She enters her apartment, locks the door, and peeks out at the man. He has a cast on his arm; she watches him struggle for a moment, then goes outside to offer help. When the chair is on the truck, he asks her to slide it toward the front. Once she's fully inside, he asks if she's about a size fourteen. Before she can answer, he cracks her over the head repeatedly with his plaster cast. He slices open her blouse up the back and nods with approval at the size tag. As the truck pulls away, the phone in Catherine Baker Martin's apartment rings. The caller is her mother, Senator Martin of Tennessee.

Chapters 11 - 15 Analysis

The author has explored the barriers Starling must overcome as a woman hoping to become an FBI agent. Now, in this section, he reveals that her gender is actually an asset, not an obstacle, to finding Buffalo Bill. Adapting to a female agent is a growth process for Crawford, and he makes a mistake by teaching the deputies in the funeral home to disregard her capabilities. He does it only as an excuse to clear the room of the extraneous deputies, but Starling shows him she is capable of commanding respect and clearing a room on her own. She does this by evoking the positive qualities of earth wisdom long associated with her gender, thus proving to Crawford that having a female on the investigation is an advantage. Rather than resenting Crawford for putting her down, Starling appreciates his willingness to learn from that mistake. This demonstrates Starling's maturity and patience, as she blazes a new path for women in law enforcement.

An important piece of symbolism is introduced in this section when Starling takes the bug cocoon to the Smithsonian for identification. The moth is the murderer's chosen symbol, and when Pilcher reveals that the word moth was once a synonym for destruction, Starling gains insight into the killer's thought process. The moth symbolism will be expanded as the story progresses. For now, it is evocative enough for Starling to realize that she is hunting someone who feeds off human tears. This symbolism applies not only to Buffalo Bill, but to Lecter, as well. The author has already shown Lecter's interest in human emotional pain, and the concept of feeding off tears sums him up quite appropriately.



Chapters 16 - 20

Chapters 16 - 20 Summary

Chapter 16: A blouse bearing Catherine Baker Martin's laundry mark is found in a homeless man's cart by the local police; the slit up the back of the blouse is characteristic of Buffalo Bill. By 6:30 a.m., Crawford hears directly from the FBI Director, who tells him the President has taken a personal interest in the case. Senator Martin, aware of Bella's illness, has offered Crawford a Lear jet so he can fly home at night while working the investigation. Crawford tells the Director that if the kidnapper is Buffalo Bill, he may panic when he realizes he's caught the Senator's daughter and kill her right away, instead of waiting his usual seven to ten days.

Chapter 17: Starling hears the news while waiting in line to shower in the dormitory bathroom. She reacts quickly, commandeering the bathroom and then packing an overnight bag. She skips breakfast, waiting for the call from Crawford which never comes. Crawford's secretary, after taking several messages from Starling, sends her back to class. She arrives late. At lunch, there are still no messages for Starling. She thinks about the deep impression the dead girl at the Potter Funeral Home has made on her psyche, and struggles with the firsthand knowledge that men like Buffalo Bill exist to take pleasure in such grotesque, murderous acts.

After school, Starling works out her frustration through exercise. She watches the news with her roommate, Ardelia Mapp, and catches Senator Ruth Martin's live address to Buffalo Bill. Senator Martin pleads for him to spare her daughter's life. Starling and Mapp note how the Senator shrewdly repeats her daughter's name, trying to get the killer to see her as a person, which will make it harder for him to kill Catherine Martin. The newsmen interview Dr. Alan Bloom, renowned expert on serial killer psychology, who is careful not to say anything to antagonize the killer.

As Mapp tries to cheer up Starling, Crawford finally calls. He instructs Starling to pack for two nights and meet him at the Smithsonian. Sternly, Mapp reminds Starling that she has examinations scheduled over the next two days. Mapp tells her Crawford owes her his help to prevent her from being recycled, which is the Academy term for being forced to repeat the entire course. Starling drives to the Smithsonian where she finds Crawford's driver waiting for her.

Chapter 18: As Crawford escorts Starling through the museum, she notes his pensive mood and thinks about all of the pressures he faces. Crawford tells her he thinks Catherine Martin is alive. Her apartment in Memphis has yielded no leads, however. Their only lead, says Crawford, is the cocoon which Starling found in the dead girl's throat in West Virginia. The FBI has found another cocoon in another body. Starling asks which body, and Crawford says he will show her. He takes her to the Anthropology department. Inside, men in labcoats work at a light table. Behind them, Jerry Burroughs, of the FBI's Behavioral Science division, takes notes. Starling sees the human head,



Klaus, which she found in Raspail's storage unit. It has been sent over to the Smithsonian, along with the bug cocoon found lodged in its throat, for expert help identifying both the person and the bug. Starling recalls that Lecter told her Klaus had died from erotic asphyxiation while making love to Benjamin Raspail. Crawford believes Lecter lied about how, why, and by whom Klaus was killed. He wants Starling to talk to Lecter again.

Chapter 19: En route, Crawford explains to Starling that Lecter did psychiatric evaluations for the courts prior to being imprisoned for murder. Crawford wonders how many dangerous lunatics Lecter turned loose just for fun. Lecter likes to lie to the authorities. Crawford had turned down Lecter's offer to help find Buffalo Bill, because Lecter's previous offer to help had resulted in the near-death of Crawford's best agent, Will Graham. However, Crawford can't ignore the bug cocoon connection between Buffalo Bill and Klaus. Lecter must somehow know Buffalo Bill's true identity. Crawford lays out a negotiation strategy for Starling: She cannot let Lecter know that the FBI found a bug cocoon in Klaus' head. If they try to get Lecter to tell them Bill's identity directly, he will stubbornly refuse. However, if they appeal to his intellect and vanity, he may help them solve the murders, just to prove how smart he is. Crawford believes that threatening Lecter will backfire. They must offer Lecter the perception that it will benefit him if Buffalo Bill is caught while Catherine Martin is still alive. Senator Martin is not aware that an offer of special privileges for Hannibal Lecter is being made in her name.

As Crawford fields a series of important calls in the back of the communications van, Starling realizes that the time he is taking to brief her personally comes at a high price. Crawford says the papers will suppress the bug cocoon in Klaus' throat for three days, but the cocoon in the West Virginia girl's throat will be mentioned in the morning news. Starling can use the girl's cocoon as a way of offering Lecter inside information, but she cannot mention the one found in Klaus' throat. They have three days before Baltimore P.D. takes over to strong-arm the information out of Lecter. Apparently, the police department is under a lot of pressure from Senator Martin's office to get Catherine back safely. Crawford tells Starling not to trust the hospital director, Chilton, with any confidential information. Chilton is known to sell such stories to the tabloids. Starling asks what they have to trade Lecter, and Crawford responds that he is still working on it.

Chapter 20: Jame Gumb sings a show tune as he showers. He is a "white male, thirty-four, six feet one inch, 205 pounds, brown and blue, no distinguishing marks." (pg. 135) He moisturizes and towels off, then tucks his penis between his legs and strikes a naked pose before the mirror. He puts on a robe and picks up his poodle, Precious. In the kitchen, he makes microwave dinners for himself and the dog, to which he speaks lovingly in a high falsetto voice. The little dog follows Jame Gumb, as he takes the leftovers in the food trays down to the basement. Gumb scrapes the food scraps into a hole in the safety cover which rests over a dry well in the basement floor. He sings to his dog, ignoring the desperate cry for help which echoes up from the well.



Chapters 16 - 20 Analysis

Just as the stakes have been raised by Catherine Martin's abduction, Starling's contribution to the investigation is bearing fruit. She is directly responsible for the discovery of both bug cocoons, tying Lecter to Buffalo Bill. Lecter and the cocoons are their only leads at this time, and Starling is the only person Lecter has spoken to in years. She has made herself valuable, which only feeds her ambition. Crawford dissects Lecter's psyche for Starling's benefit, and demonstrates his growing trust in her by sending her in, fully informed this time. During her previous interview with Lecter, Crawford had used her ignorance and inexperience as tools to elicit Lecter's cooperation. This time, Crawford confides in her, and puts the delicate negotiations completely in her hands. This important turning point for Starling's career is echoed by another turning point in the novel, as the author introduces Jame Gumb, A.K.A. Buffalo Bill, for the first time.



Chapters 21 - 25

Chapters 21 - 25 Summary

Chapter 21: Chilton, dressed up in an English-cut sports coat, waits for Starling in his office. Her distaste for Chilton makes it easier to lie when she tells him she is there on a routine errand to clear up some loose ends in the Klaus murder. He asks if she is wearing a wire. When she says she is not, he tries to offer her a pocket tape recorder, which she refuses. Chilton insists she tape the interview and share the tape with him. She holds her ground and refers him to the U.S. Attorney's office if he doesn't like it. Starling wins the showdown, for the moment at least.

Chapter 22: Barney, the orderly, welcomes Starling back. As she passes cells full of madmen, she thinks of the one who holds Catherine Martin. Starling forces herself to remain calm in the face of her urgency to save Catherine. She finds Dr. Lecter sketching in his cell. He smells the fresh Band-Aid she wears on her calf. Starling tells him about the body they found in West Virginia, and how it was scalped, just as Lecter had predicted. He wants to know how she felt when she saw the body. She tells him she felt shaken, but she functioned quite well. Lecter wants to know what Crawford thinks of his scalping prediction. Starling replies that both Crawford and Dr. Alan Bloom think it was an easy guess. Lecter asks what her instincts tell her about Buffalo Bill. She says he's a sadist, according to Alan Bloom's classifications. Lecter has read Bloom's book, and doesn't think much of Bloom's classifications. Lecter tests Starling by asking her to diagnose the killer who now inhabits Miggs' old cell. From his clues, Starling correctly deduces that he is a catatonic schizoid, and treatable. Clarice asks why Lecter doesn't think Buffalo Bill is a sadist. Lecter says the victims weren't skinned for fun; Bill has a purpose.

Starling mentions Senator Martin, and presents Lecter with an incentive package, supposedly authorized by the senator's office, in exchange for Lecter's "extraordinary insight," which she hopes will help get Catherine Martin back alive (pg. 150). Lecter doesn't believe Crawford would ever allow Lecter to benefit, even if he does agree to help. Lecter's fee, he tells Clarice, is information. He will trade information about Buffalo Bill for information about Clarice Starling. His first request is for her worst childhood memory. Clarice tells him about the death of her father, a town marshal fatally wounded by two drug-addicted burglars. After revealing these personal details, Clarice reminds Lecter that it's his turn to provide information; their deal is quid pro quo. Lecter mentions the large size of the dead girl in West Virginia. Starling tells him they found an insect in her throat; her heart skips a beat when Lecter asks if it was a butterfly. Lecter's final words for the night are that Buffalo Bill "wants a vest with tits on it" (pg. 152).

Chapter 23: Seventeen feet below the cellar floor, Catherine Martin thinks through her situation. Her shock has worn off, and she can tell she's in the bottom of a pit. Her finger is broken and she wears a strange quilted jumpsuit. In the hole with her are chicken bones, a futon, and a sanitation bucket attached by a string to the top of the pit. She



hears dog claws on linoleum and human footsteps; the basement lights come on, and a bright spotlight shines down the well. As her captor raises the toilet bucket upwards on its string, she offers him money to let her go. Ignoring her, he tells her to wash herself. The bucket is lowered down full of hot, soapy water. He threatens to turn the hose on her if she doesn't comply. She washes, then rubs in the skin lotion he has provided. Catherine sees a human fingernail, covered in blood and glitter nail polish, on the stone wall of the well. Alone again in darkness, Catherine thinks of the skin lotion and the broken fingernail. When it dawns on her who has captured her, she begins to scream.

Chapter 24: Starling calls Crawford from a payphone outside the hospital to report on her talk with Lecter. He tells her the dead girl from West Virginia has been identified as Kimberly Jane Emberg. She went missing three days before the time of death estimated by the coroner. That means that Bill may kill Catherine Martin sooner than expected. Crawford says if Lecter is going to deliver Buffalo Bill, he better do it now. They can't afford to play waiting games. Starling asks for a better offer to trade Lecter; Crawford promises she'll have it in five minutes.

Chapter 25: When Starling arrives at Lecter's cell, Barney brings a school desk for her to use. When he leaves, Starling informs Lecter that the Senator has put together a remarkable package of benefits for him. Starling tells him it is a take it or leave it proposition; the Senator will not bargain. If he helps them catch Buffalo Bill before Catherine dies, Lecter will be transferred to a cell with a view in Oneida Park, New York. He will have reasonable access to books and will be asked to evaluate written psychological tests on federal inmates. Once a year, he will travel to Plum Island, where he can spend one hour a day on the beach for a full week, under SWAT team surveillance, of course. She passes the paperwork through the drawer for him to examine.

Lecter notes wryly that Plum Island is the Animal Disease Center for Federal hoof and mouth disease research. He reminds her of their quid pro quo deal, and she agrees to talk about herself if he talks about Buffalo Bill. After a long silence, he begins. A caterpillar emerges from its chrysalis transformed into a beautiful imago. In psychoanalytic terms, an imago is the image of one's parent, buried in the unconscious of an infant. Lecter implies that Crawford should see the psychological significance of the insect chrysalis. It means change. Buffalo Bill wants to change into a woman, and he is "making himself a girl suit out of real girls." (pg. 163) Starling protests that transsexuals are generally non-violent. Lecter tells her that the killer is not a true transsexual, but that she's close to the way she's going to find him. He turns the tables and asks what happened to her after her father's death. Starling trades personal details, from which Lecter deduces that her father had been a night watchman, not an actual cop. Lecter rewards her by telling her Buffalo Bill thinks he is a transsexual, and probably has applied for gender change surgery at the three local hospitals which offer it. Lecter tells her the doctors will have rejected Bill's request, based on criminal record and the personality tests the hospitals give.

When Starling asks what items would disqualify Bill on the personality tests, Lecter asks about the family she lived with after her father's death. She tells him she lived with her



mother's cousin's family on a sheep and horse ranch until she ran away. Lecter presses for details, and she explains the ranch slaughtered horses for glue; she had escaped on her favorite horse, hoping to save its life. Starling refuses to answer more questions, until he tells her what aberrations to look for on the personality tests to find Buffalo Bill. He tells her to look for a white male, thirty-five, with a history of extreme childhood violence. Lecter provides specific details to look for on the hospital's personality tests. He then ends the interview. Starling doesn't notice Chilton's office light is still on when she hurries out of the building.

Chapters 21 - 25 Analysis

In this section, Lecter fully develops the symbolism of the bug cocoon. In psychological terms, he explains, the imago is an image of one's parent, created in infancy. For an insect, such as a caterpillar, the imago image, formed in infancy, guides the caterpillar in its transformation to an adult moth. In terms of Buffalo Bill's psychology, his imago would be the image he formed of his parent while Bill was himself an infant. The parent in question is likely the mother, since Bill is intent on transforming himself into a female. Everything the reader needs to know to understand Buffalo Bill is implicit in the symbolism of the imago. In subsequent chapters, as the author reveals more about Bill, this symbolism will take on even greater depth and meaning.



Chapters 26 - 30

Chapters 26 - 30 Summary

Chapter 26: Dr. Hannibal Lecter stands stiffly bound to a mover's hand truck with a straitjacket, leg restraints, canvas webbing, and over his face, a hockey mask. Barney personally supervises these arrangements as Hannibal's cell is cleaned. Lecter draws on his memory and intellect to entertain him while he waits. He considers how to give up Jame Gumb to Clarice Starling. Hannibal remembers the last day of Raspail's life. Raspail had been on Lecter's therapy couch, talking about Jame Gumb. Jame had done "*the bad thing again*," and he'd been fired from his job, too. (pg. 172) Raspail confides to Dr. Lecter that Jame is not really homosexual; he's just trying to fill the empty void inside him. On top of everything, Raspail had dumped Jame in favor of Klaus. In Jame's despair, he had found new hope in a suitcase full of dead butterflies, which his former boss collected. A live butterfly, amidst the dead, inspired Jame. He had killed Klaus and made an apron from his skin. As Raspail recounted his lover's exploits to Lecter, Raspail suddenly found himself staring at the stiletto knife which Lecter had put through his heart. Lecter remembers this occasion with pleasure. Lecter resolves to read up on the Buffalo Bill case file in order to come up with some more detailed hints to give Starling. By tomorrow, Lecter figures, he'll have given her enough information to figure out Jame Gumb's identity.

Chapter 27: Dr. Chilton arrives while Lecter's cell is being cleaned and sends the others away. This is the first deviation from Barney's security procedure since the time Lecter savaged a nurse. Lecter watches Chilton remove a listening device from the school desk. Chilton waves the bug in front of Lecter's nose, commenting that it's been years since he's heard Lecter's voice. The last time, Chilton reminds him, was when Lecter had given him false answers in an interview, and then ridiculed Chilton's resulting article in another psychological publication. Chilton blames Lecter for stalling his career. Chilton asks if Starling's good looks finally convinced Lecter to speak. He tells Lecter that Starling only has one more day with him before Baltimore P.D. takes over. Chilton has a friend in Baltimore Homicide, and reveals to Lecter that they found a bug in Klaus' throat. The FBI knows Lecter can tell them Buffalo Bill's real name. Senator Martin's deal is a fake, and Hannibal will never see the sunlight again. Chilton tells him Starling and Crawford have been having an affair since Bella got sick. Chilton offers Lecter a real proposal, obtained from Senator Martin by Chilton personally. Lecter replies that the killer's first name is Billy, and he'll reveal the rest to the Senator personally, in Tennessee.

Chapter 28: Dr. Danielson, head of the Gender Identity Clinic at Johns Hopkins, tells Crawford the FBI cannot look at his patient files without a court order. Crawford explains that the man they seek is not a patient; the hospital will have rejected his application based on certain criteria. Crawford suggests Danielson discuss the criteria more fully with Dr. Bloom. Danielson insists that examination and interview materials are confidential. Crawford counters that the man they are looking for will have lied and



misrepresented himself on the application, which negates his right to confidentiality. Danielson, again, refuses. Crawford threatens to subject the hospital to bad publicity if they do nothing, while Catherine Martin dies. Dr. Danielson agrees only to discuss the matter with Dr. Bloom. As he leaves the hospital, Crawford receives notification that Lecter is being moved to Tennessee due to Chilton and Senator Martin's influence.

Chapter 29: Dr. Lecter says goodbye to Barney in the back of an ambulance, thanking Barney for treating him decently all these years. Lecter is once again strapped to the mover's handcart. Barney rolls him out of the ambulance and into Tennessee police custody. Barney confers with Dr. Chilton, concerned that the Tennessee police will not know how to handle Lecter. Barney offers to accompany Lecter to Tennessee, but Chilton tells him Lecter is no longer his concern.

Chapter 30: Starling sits on her motel room bed, stunned at the telephone call she just received from Crawford. In the three hours since Starling left to finally get some sleep, Chilton has managed to screw up everything she and Crawford had achieved. The situation recalls a childhood memory. Clarice's mother had been a motel maid, and Clarice recalls an opportunistic crow that used to steal things off the cleaning cart. She remembers her mother standing in the motel room door on the day she had told Clarice that she would have to live in Montana. Shaking off the memory, Clarice finishes packing, just as Crawford arrives.

Chapters 26 - 30 Analysis

Crawford's interference reminds Starling of a childhood memory. The black and white crow that used to steal items off her mother's cleaning cart is not only an appropriate metaphor for Chilton, but later in the novel, the author will extend the metaphor in an important way. In this section, the crow symbolizes the impossibility of fending off even small nuisances if they are persistent, as Chilton is. Clarice, as a child, had found it impossible to defend the cleaning supplies from the greedy crow, because she had other responsibilities inside the motel room, and could not guard the cart while she was inside. Chilton, too, looks for opportunities to interfere. Like the crow, he has merely to wait for Starling to leave before descending on Lecter.



Chapters 31 - 35

Chapters 31 - 35 Summary

Chapter 31: As Starling exits the motel, Crawford can tell how angry she is. They walk to the corner drugstore for coffee; and Jeff trails them in the car. Starling asks what they can do to Chilton. She also asks Crawford to let her stay on the case. Crawford tells her they'll deal with Chilton later. He warns her that he cannot save her from being recycled if she misses much more school. Starling asks him if he is "in the glue" with Senator Martin's people (pg. 192). Crawford tells her it doesn't matter, since he is two years away from mandatory retirement. He is careful to speak only of things that he knows to be true; he does not want to mislead young Starling with cheap wisdom dispensed to make himself feel wise. He tells her one thing that he knows for sure: The key to being a good leader is managing one's rage and frustration. He asks her to freeze her feelings about Chilton for now and stay focused on saving Catherine. He wants her to go to Memphis, and to be nearby in case Lecter wants to talk to her. Starling is only a little older than Catherine, and may be able to get more information from her friends than someone who looks more like a cop. Crawford goes inside for the coffee, as she spots Barney exiting the hospital. Starling tells Barney there could be repercussions for helping Chilton bug the school desk. She sends Barney inside to get her all of the personal items left in Lecter's cell. Crawford is pleased.

Chapter 32: In an Air National Guard hangar at the airport, Senator Ruth Martin watches the state troopers unload Hannibal Lecter from the airplane. Crawford calls; she asks why he didn't tell her about Lecter. Crawford replies that he was afraid she would do exactly what she's doing. The senator tells him he'll be sorry if he fights her. Crawford wants Dr. Bloom to brief her before she speaks to Lecter. Martin insists that she has professional assistance. Crawford indicates that Chilton's assistance is unlikely to be helpful. The senator upbraids Crawford for sending a green recruit to visit Lecter with a phony offer. She intends to make Lecter a real offer. Crawford suggests that she keep the FBI informed, so they can help. Martin tells him that Paul Krendler from the Justice Department will be heading up the investigation. Crawford asks if she will at least speak to Starling before she sees Lecter, but the senator wants to waste no time.

Chilton and two video cameras accompany the Senator, when she speaks to Lecter. With a theatrical flourish, Chilton removes Lecter's mask. Senator Martin's confidence in Chilton is replaced by sudden fear that she has trusted a fool. Knowing she's on her own, she holds up a written offer for Lecter to see. Lecter replies that he won't waste time bargaining for privileges; he will help her now and trust her to help him later. Lecter tells her Buffalo Bill's real name is Billy Rubin. Rubin was referred to Lecter in 1975 by Raspail. When the head investigator presses Lecter for details, he stops talking. The senator clears the room. Alone, Lecter asks her if she breastfed Catherine; he drinks in her pain. Lecter describes Billy Rubin, and mentions that Rubin once suffered from elephant ivory anthrax. The senator tells Lecter she's made temporary arrangements for him in Memphis; he will be transferred to a prison out of Crawford's reach, once



everything's settled. He asks for music, the *Goldberg Variations*. She agrees. In parting, Lecter tells her not to trust Jack Crawford, who only cares about credit and glory.

Chapter 33: Jame Gumb's basement is a warren of secret rooms. He used to take his pleasure in the back rooms, many of which had been walled off while Gumb's victims were still alive inside. As Gumb's confidence grew, he stopped using the back rooms. Now, he uses the suite of rooms immediately surrounding the basement stairs and the well. At this moment, Gumb sits in one of the darkened rooms, patiently watching a young imago emerge from its chrysalis with his infrared flashlight and night vision goggles. He watches the wings emerge, with their telltale pattern resembling a skull stacked atop a human pelvis. Quietly, he sneaks to the well and shines his invisible infrared flashlight down the hole. He doesn't want to wake the "material," as he thinks of Catherine Martin. He moves the beam down her back, considering the best place to put the zipper. He has learned to wait several days before removing the hide, which makes it looser and easier to manage. Semi-starvation makes his subjects more docile, though he provides just enough food to prevent "despair and destructive tantrums which might damage the skin." (pg. 206) Looking over her skin, he decides she will be ready by tomorrow night at the latest.

Chapter 34: Starling parks her car in front of Catherine Martin's apartment. The FBI bio on Catherine shows her to be a smart underachiever. She's on her third college, having done poorly at the first two, and works as a practice teacher. Starling is careful of her personal prejudices. She went to boarding school with rich kids like Catherine and resented their air of indifference to the schooling she worked so hard to obtain. However, Starling has grown to realize that inattention is also a way to avoid pain; such pain can be misconstrued as shallowness or indifference. Remembering that Catherine's father is dead, Starling realizes they have this in common, and warms up to her. Starling needs to like Catherine; this helps her stay focused on saving her.

From the kitchen, Starling can tell that Catherine rarely cooks. In the bedroom, she discovers the two twin beds are sometimes pushed together. She wonders if it's for the boyfriend, or if Catherine has another lover. The room has been thoroughly searched, but Starling just wants to understand Catherine better. The closet reveals clothes too expensive for a practice teacher's salary, likely gifts from the senator. Catherine keeps two sizes of clothes, plus a couple of pairs of fat pants, just in case. In Catherine's private correspondence, Starling finds a sheet of blotter paper with cartoon Plutos. She bags it for evidence. The jewelry box contains junk jewelry, and Starling wonders where the better pieces are kept. In the secret drawer which comes standard in feminine jewelry boxes, Starling finds pictures which the Tennessee policemen missed. The photos are of Catherine Martin and a man, engaged in sexual acts. The man has an appendix scar; Starling slips the photos into a brown envelope and returns the drawer to the jewelry box.

The senator catches Starling taking evidence from the jewelry box. Martin demands to know what valuables Starling has stolen. Starling does not want to reveal the compromising photos to Catherine's mom. Martin calls Paul Krendler from the Justice Department into the bedroom and demands that Starling hand the envelope over to



Krendler. Starling asks to speak to him privately, but his distrust of her shows in his face, and he demands the envelope. After both Krendler and the Senator have seen the photos, Senator Martin tells Starling that the police who searched the room previously must have had the good sense to put the photos back and keep their mouths shut. Starling, defensive, tells her the photos had been missed by the previous search, and insists they need to be checked out to verify the man's identity. The Senator says she'll take care of it and keeps the photos. She walks out without another word to Starling.

Starling shows the blotter paper to Krendler, explaining that it's a sheet of blotter acid. Krendler tells her to take it to Washington personally for examination, since he is sending her back to school. Starling loses her temper with Krendler, telling him not to let Senator Martin run the show when Crawford's much more qualified. Krendler demands she hand over her temporary ID. Starling tells him she needs it in order to fly back to Quantico with the gun. Krendler tells her to be on the plane to Quantico tonight, and orders her to hand in the ID and gun upon her return. As Starling leaves, she overhears the Senator listening to the hotline for leads turned up by Lecter's information. The elephant ivory anthrax Lecter mentioned is a disease of knifemakers. Senator Martin shudders at the news. On her way out, Starling remembers Crawford's advice and swallows her anger. She recalls Kimberly, the dead girl from West Virginia, who had no senators or hotshot Justice Department guys to look out for her. Starling decides to speak to Lecter before leaving town. She knows he's lying about Billy Rubin.

Chapter 35: Starling drives quickly through the Memphis traffic. "She felt oddly floaty and free now. An unnatural clarity in her vision warned her that she was inclined to fight, so she was careful of herself." (pg. 221) Lecter is being housed temporarily at the old courthouse, a massive granite block structure which looks like a medieval fortress. Starling lets the officer at the desk think she's one of Paul Krendler's people. He takes her weapon and she rides the elevator to the top floor. Lecter's cell lies in the center of the huge open floorplan; it is a tempered steel cage with sheet steel flooring laid over bars. Officer Pembry asks if she knows the safety procedures; she assures him she does.

Lecter asks if she wants to talk about Billy Rubin. Starling tells Lecter his idea of the imago, which he had only begun to communicate to her and had a certain elegance. She asks him to finish telling her about that idea. He responds by asking if she sews, and suggests that she let her jacket out, so that her gun won't be so obvious. Starling tells him how everyone had reacted to elephant ivory anthrax being a knifemaker's disease. She accuses Lecter of making up this gruesome detail to provoke fear in Senator Martin and the investigators. Lecter tells her about Emperor Marcus Aurelius' philosophy of first principles. "Of each particular thing, ask: What is it in itself, in its own constitution? What is its causal nature?" (pg. 227) Starling asks for clarification. Lecter asks what Buffalo Bill *does*. She says he *kills*. Lecter asks why he kills. What principal or need do the killings serve? Starling suggests resentment or frustration, but Lecter corrects her. Buffalo Bill *covets*. That's what he does, what he is.

Now, Lecter calls Clarice on their quid pro quo deal. He wants to know what happened to the horse she tried to save. She tries to rush him, but he insists it's the only way for



her to get what she wants. So, she answers. She was twelve years old when she ran away with the horse she had named Hannah. They had ridden to a nearby dude ranch. The dude ranch owners had called the sheriff, and Starling had wound up in an orphanage. Hannah had been allowed to live at the orphanage, too, where she had plowed the garden and led the children on cart rides. Two years ago, Starling had received a letter from the orphanage telling her Hannah had died in her sleep after twenty-two happy years. Lecter is disappointed at the heartwarming nature of the tale. He asks her if her foster father in Montana ever molested her. To his further disappointment, the answer is "no." Lecter digs around, looking for pain in her past. He asks why she chose that particular day to run away with the horse. Clarice admits to having been woken in the middle of the night by the screaming of the spring lambs as they were slaughtered. Lecter asks her if she still wakes up in the night and hears the lambs screaming. Sometimes she does, admits Starling. Lecter asks if she thinks the lambs will stop screaming if she saves Catherine Martin. Dr. Chilton arrives just then and has her thrown out. As she's being pulled away, Starling demands that Lecter give her Buffalo Bill's real name. Instead, he hands the case file back to her, through the bars. Their fingers brush, for an instant.

Chapters 31 - 35 Analysis

Lecter's earlier insight into Starling is proven true by her reaction to Senator Martin and Krendler. Starling is defensive and hostile, resenting both of them because of their elevated stations in life. Certainly Krendler and Martin contribute to her hostility through their condescending superiority, but Starling's anger seems disproportionate. Her anger reveals her fear that she is not as good as them because of her family's poverty. Nevertheless, her anger is not all bad. She is a fighter, and this can serve her well in her chosen career, if she remembers Crawford's advice about controlling her temper.

Starling's previous insight about serial killers also proves true in this section. Through the types of questions Lecter asks her, he does indeed seem to be a creature who lives off human tears. Lecter roots around in her past, seeking out pain. To watch Starling re-experience that pain is all the payment he seeks for helping to find Buffalo Bill. Similarly, Lecter feeds off the Senator's pain, when he causes her to recall breastfeeding Catherine. Thus, Noble Pilcher's description of the destructive moth that feeds on tears is developed by the author into a clear metaphor which aptly describes Lecter's murderous motivation.



Chapters 36 - 40

Chapters 36 - 40 Summary

Chapter 36: Officers Pembry and Boyle are experienced at guarding prisoners, and have taken every precaution with Lecter, including subjecting him to an oral and internal cavity search. When the metal detector beeps over his cheek, Pembry believes it is because of Lecter's fillings. Boyle believes Lecter is "'pretty much of a broke-dick'" who won't be much trouble. (pg. 233) The cell lacks a rolling food tray. So, at mealtimes, Pembry and Boyle must secure him in a straitjacket and leg restraints, while they carry in his tray. Pembry and Boyle don't think much of Chilton, and in his absence one evening, they decide to use their own method to secure Lecter. They cuff Lecter's arms behind him through the bars of the cage, then deliver the meal. Lecter eats slowly while listening to the *Goldberg Variations*. In a meditative mood, Lecter runs his tongue along his gums until he feels the metal tube tucked in a crevice. Only twice during Lecter's imprisonment has there been a lapse in security, both times on Barney's days off. Once he had savaged a nurse, and the second time, he had hidden the ink tube from the pen left behind by a psychiatric researcher. Six months later, Lecter had acquired a paperclip in his carelessly sorted mail. Now, behind the privacy screen of his toilet, Lecter puts together a handcuff key. He hides it in his hand, as Pembry comes for the tray.

Pembry repeats the previous procedure, cuffing Lecter to the bars of his cell. Pembry stands at the cell door, while Boyle enters to retrieve the tray. Lecter unlocks his cuffs and snaps it onto Boyle's wrist; the other end goes around the bolted metal table leg. Lecter lunges for Pembry, mashing him behind the cell door. Lecter elbows Pembry in the throat, then goes for his face with his teeth while pulling the riot baton from Pembry's belt. Bellowing, Boyle fumbles for his handcuff key, as Lecter drives the baton into Pembry's stomach and throat. Lecter shoots Pembry's mace in Boyle's face, then beats Boyle to death with five blows of the baton. Lecter turns back to Pembry, who is crying, and smiles before clubbing him in the back of the head with the baton. Lecter's pulse, elevated to one hundred by the killings, quickly returns to normal.

Chapter 37: At 6:30 p.m., the lobby of the courthouse is filled with policemen waiting to relieve the eleven-to-seven shift. At 6:45, the elevator starts up, and stops on the fifth floor. Gunshots boom out from upstairs. Sergeant Tate barks into his microphone and orders a squad of men to go upstairs with him. The elevator is on three; the officers in the lobby cover it with their guns. Tate has Tennessee SWAT experience, and guides his men professionally up the stairs, clearing each floor as they go. He posts a man on the third floor, where the empty elevator has come to rest. The sight that greets him on the fifth floor is the most horrifying thing he has ever seen. Pembry's face is grotesque with blood. Boyle's face is hacked to pieces and he is partly eviscerated; his guts decorate the cell walls. Tate feels Pembry's pulse and is dismayed to realize he is alive, that a man could live in that condition. He orders one of his men to sit with Pembry, while they wait for the ambulance.



The ambulance attendants arrive on the elevator and take Pembry away. Tate and another officer ride the elevator downstairs after clearing the upstairs levels. On the ride down, a drop of blood hits his shoulder. He motions to the other officer for silence and they wait for the car to reach the lobby. They back out, guns trained at the ceiling of the elevator car. Tate quietly sends men upstairs to cover the elevator shaft. An officer pokes a long-handled mirror into the shaft from the third floor. He reports a visual on Lecter. Lecter is not moving; one of his hands is out of sight. Peterson tells Lecter to put his hands up, but there's no response. They threaten Lecter with a tear gas bomb. Still, there's no movement. From below, Tate enters the car and opens the ceiling hatch. Lecter is dead. As his body is brought down, they see tattoos, and realize it's Officer Pembry.

Chapter 38: In the back of the ambulance, the attendant is caught by surprise as Lecter brings a pistol down on his head. The ambulance comes to a halt on the freeway. Two popping sounds, like muffler backfires are heard. Then, the ambulance starts to back up, heading for the airport exit.

Chapter 39: Starling meets Crawford in his neat, 1950s ranch-style house. Crawford asks if Starling handed anything to Lecter in Memphis. Starling denies giving him anything. The only thing which passed between them was the Buffalo Bill case file that Lecter handed *her*. Crawford offers Starling coffee. She asks who was asking about her handing things to Lecter. Crawford says Chilton has been trying to blame Lecter's escape on Starling. Crawford asks if Chilton had tried to hit on Starling and been shot down, thinking that may be why he's got it in for Starling. Starling says maybe so, and accepts his offer of coffee. The homey feel of the Crawfords' house soothes Starling's nerves. Crawford tells her that they haven't found the ambulance, yet. He explains how Lecter put on Pembry's uniform and face to fool the police. Lecter fired shots to get the cops upstairs, then had simply ridden away in the ambulance.

Starling asks Crawford if he's in the glue; and Crawford admits he's been directed to take compassionate leave. He asks if Starling is in the glue. She says that Krendler has only asked for her temporary badge and gun back. Crawford reminds her that was all he did before she chose to visit Lecter without permission. Crawford informs her that after her visit, Krendler sent a request to the Office of Professional Responsibility for Starling's suspension. Both Crawford and John Brigham think it's a cheap shot, and have said as much to the people who need to hear it. Crawford assures her she'll beat the hearing, but he cannot prevent her from being recycled if she misses any more class. It's her choice; he can't ask her to give up six months of her life for a recycle. Starling asks about Catherine. Crawford thinks Bill will kill her tomorrow. He orders Starling not to turn in her gun while Lecter's on the loose. A phone call advises him that the ambulance attendants are both dead. He suggests Starling return to school, where she'll be safe. First, he gives her one last assignment. He asks her to follow up with Pilcher on the bug ID.

Chapter 40: An exhausted Starling meets Pilcher at the Insect Zoo in the Smithsonian. Pilcher shows her the Death's-head Moth, *Acherontia styx*, from Malaysia. Pilcher explains that someone would have had to go to a lot of trouble to import and raise it.



Pilcher describes the moths as fighters, and begins to reminisce about having seen some in Borneo. Starling cuts him short, wanting information about how the moths can be brought into the country. Pilcher realizes her hurry and hands her a list he's already compiled with the information she needs. As he escorts her out, she realizes he is as tired as she. She apologizes for being abrupt, understanding now that Pilcher and his partner Roden have stayed up the past two nights to identify her moth quickly. Pilcher tells her he'd like to get to know her when the investigation is through.

Chapters 36 - 40 Analysis

Lecter's escape has been repeatedly foreshadowed by the author in earlier chapters. From the very beginning, Starling is admonished not to deviate from the security procedures, which the orderly Barney has established. Barney is the only one able to handle Lecter. In fact, the only two previous deviations from Barney's strict security procedures occurred on his days off. The author has made it clear that, if Lecter is given even the slightest opportunity, he will kill, maim or worse. The author has additionally increased the tension, by making it clear that many hospital and law enforcement personnel do not take the security procedures seriously enough. Chilton certainly does not. When Barney expresses doubts about the Tennessee lawmen's ability to contain Lecter, Chilton ignores him. Thus, it is no surprise when Lecter escapes their custody. The reader can only watch in horrified fascination, as Lecter carries out his diabolical plans.



Chapters 41 - 45

Chapters 41 - 45 Summary

Chapter 41: The darkness seems to be closing in on Catherine Martin. From above, she can hear the sound of a sewing machine. Such a sound feels wrong in the bowels of this foul basement. Her captor's voice sounds wrong and unearthly as it talks to the poodle. Catherine has had to wash herself twice now. The second time, she had made him a sexual proposition as she stood naked in his spotlight. "Catherine Baker Martin naked was a show-stopper, a girl and a half in all directions, and she knew it. She wanted him to see. She wanted out of the pit. Close enough to fuck is close enough to fight - " she tells herself. "*Balls and eyes, balls and eyes, ballsandeyes.*" (pg. 265) However, the killer had not responded to her offers. Now, hours later, she has another plan. Catherine rubs the bucket string against the lip of the well until it breaks. She ties the chicken bone to the bucket handle, and, after several painful attempts, tosses the bucket out of the well. She retains the other end of the string and calls the poodle. Precious goes for the bone, but just as Catherine thinks she'll be able to pull the dog into the well, the poodle hears its master and abandons the bone. Catherine cries in the dark, certain now that she will die.

Chapter 42: Just after midnight, Crawford brainstorms in his study at home for ways to find the killer. He dozes off but is woken by the telephone. Jerry Burroughs at the crime hotline calls his attention to a new urgent bulletin posted on the computer. Jack punches it up on his computer. A homemade handcuff key was found in Lecter's cell, and a sheet of notepaper was found floating in Lecter's toilet. The notepaper contains a biochemistry cipher:

The cipher works out to the following biochemical formula: C₃₃ H₃₆ N₄ O₆. This is the formula for a pigment in human bile, which is also the chief coloring agent in human feces. The pigment is called bilirubin. Billy Rubin. Burroughs notes that when Lecter escaped, Chilton had been conducting television interviews about the search for Billy Rubin. Burroughs thinks Lecter is laughing his head off somewhere. Crawford responds that he won't be laughing for long.

Chapter 43: Lecter checks into the elegant Marcus Hotel in St. Louis under the name of his latest victim, Lloyd Wyman. The hotel caters to rich people recovering from plastic surgery, so Lecter is able to cover his face with surgical bandages without arousing suspicion. Once settled in his room, Lecter thinks back on his escape. He wonders if the police will be foolish enough to think he flew out of the airport where he abandoned the ambulance. Instead, he had surprised Lloyd Wyman and driven the five hours to St. Louis in Wyman's car, with Wyman in the trunk.

Chapter 44: When Starling finally returns to Quantico, Ardelia Mapp lifts Starling's spirits. Mapp tells her that John Brigham stopped by and offered to work out a schedule so Starling can catch up on her studying. Brigham hopes to enter Starling in an



interservice shooting match. He believes Starling is qualified to shoot with the best of either gender. He also believes she'll beat the hearing. Mapp agrees to help Starling cram for finals, and Starling finally goes to sleep.

Chapter 45: Just before 3 a.m., Bella Crawford takes her final breath as her husband holds her hand. Jack has cried all his tears already. Now, as he sits with her lifeless body, he is overwhelmed with a rush of loving memories from their life together.

Chapters 41 - 45 Analysis

This section covers the night before Catherine Martin is to die. The author visits her in the pit, and shows the reader that Catherine is a fighter. She is also smart, and thus has more in common with Starling than Starling realizes. Unfortunately, this long night vigil finds the investigators further from saving Catherine than ever. As Starling prepares to return to school, Crawford is finding out about Lecter's betrayal. Meanwhile, Lecter has escaped and is settled comfortably in a swank hotel, completely off the police radar. The author has brought the investigation to a low point. Who will save the day? The hero is certainly not Crawford, whose wife dies this night. It is not Chilton or Senator Martin, either. The author implies that the two individuals with the best chance of saving Catherine are Starling and Catherine herself. For all Starling's fears about her gender holding her back, it seems that only the young, strong females have a chance at saving the day.



Chapters 46 - 50

Chapters 46 - 50 Summary

Chapter 46: Jame Gumb sets up the VCR with the tape he always watches before harvesting a hide. It is black and white footage from the 1948 Miss Sacramento contest, featuring his mother, looped in with footage from a cable sex channel, featuring sprightly naked women sliding down a waterslide into the pool. Gumb is certain that one of the female swimmers is his mother. He heads down to his basement workroom. The California Department of Corrections taught him how to sew, and he regularly takes on paying projects. However, his sewing room also contains an armoire full of his Special Things. He also has a tailor's form cast in his exact proportions.

Gumb considers the difficult problem of sewing human skin without creating unsightly puckers. He has taught himself to tan a hide with cow brains, similarly to how the Native Americans created butter-soft buckskin. His problem now is how to create a seamless front to his garment, and where to hide the zipper. Catherine Martin is not as broad in the back as Gumb, and so he will also have to put in some vertical inset darts under the arms and at the waistline. He is concerned not only with how the garment will look, but also with how it will feel. There can be no seams in the back where someone might feel them while hugging him. He works on a muslin pattern garment, trying to get just the right fit. He pictures himself running nimbly up the ladder of a water slide and promises Precious they will harvest the hide tomorrow.

Chapter 47: Starling awakens with the screaming of the lambs ringing in her ears. Awake in the dark, anger replaces the fear of the dream. Starling is furious that Senator Martin accused her of theft. Starling knows what Dr. Lecter would say, and she thinks he would be right. Starling "was afraid there was something tacky that Senator Martin saw in her, something cheap, something thieflike that Senator Martin reacted to. That Vanderbilt bitch." (pg. 290) Starling considers her position. She is an academic overachiever, and knows she can still ace her classes, even with time lost. She is concerned about having Krendler for an enemy, and is afraid Crawford is getting weak. Then, Starling remembers Catherine, alive out there somewhere.

Kimberly haunts Starling; they share the same type of upbringing. Starling doesn't think Catherine Martin would like Kimberly any more than Senator Martin cares for Starling. Well, she thinks, Catherine and Kimberly are sisters now. "All of Buffalo Bill's victims were women, his obsession was women, he lived to hunt women. Not one woman was hunting him full time." (pg. 292) Starling remembers the phrase Crawford had used earlier: He said Bill would "do her tomorrow" (pg. 292). This phrase angers Starling into getting up and working on the Buffalo Bill case file. In the file, she finds a note from Lecter. He thinks the random river dump sites for the bodies are too elaborately random. Starling calls the hotline with Lecter's tip, but Burroughs tells her about Lecter's worthless Billy Rubin information, and asks her not to call Crawford right now, because Bella just died. On her own, Starling wonders if Lecter is lying to her as he lied to the



senator. However, she thinks through what Lecter said about first principles. She reviews the case file and realizes that Bill's first victim, Frederica Bimmel, had actually been found second. Frederica's body had been weighted down, whereas none of the other bodies had been. Starling concludes that if, as Lecter said, Bill covets what he sees around him every day, then he might live in Belvedere, Ohio, Frederica's home town. Starling makes a decision.

Chapter 48: Crawford exits the funeral home where he has just finished making his wife's arrangements. He finds Starling waiting outside under the awning. She asks him to send her to get a feel for the other victims as he had sent her to do with Catherine Martin. She is sorry for her poor timing, but Catherine has no time left. Starling reminds Crawford that there are no women involved in the investigation, and she believes she can contribute to the investigation with her feminine perspective. He asks if she is ready to accept a recycle. When she indicates that she is, he gives her permission to check out Frederica Bimmel. She leaves, and Crawford looks into the sack he is carrying containing his wife's shoes. He weeps openly in the street.

Chapter 49: It's the morning of the fourth day, and Gumb is ready to harvest his hide. He lines up his sewing supplies and skinning knives, excited about the wonderful day ahead of him. Killing this one, without damaging the precious parts of the hide, will be a challenge. He plans to put two bullets into her lower spine with his Colt Python. Gumb calls Precious, intending to lock the dog in the upstairs bedroom while he kills the girl. However, Precious doesn't answer his call. Instead, a voice from the bottom of the well informs him the dog is down there. Gumb leans over the well, pistol in hand, and sees Catherine holding Precious. He cocks the pistol, but Catherine holds the dog up in front of her. He is forced to speak to her directly, which feels unnatural to him. He threatens to withhold food and water. She responds that the dog will go without, as well. Catherine lies and tells him the dog's leg is broken. Furious, Gumb leaves.

Chapter 50: Starling arrives in the shabby neighborhood in Belvedere where the Bimmel house sits. Starling is torn between her need to chase Buffalo Bill and feeling like a truant for skipping school. She has paid a high price for this extra time, and plans to use it well. Frederica's father, Gustav Bimmel, allows her to look around, but says he has already told the police everything.

Chapters 46 - 50 Analysis

In Chapter 47, as Starling decides to sacrifice her own best interests to go after Buffalo Bill, she thinks again of the black and white crow that used to steal from her mother's cleaning cart: "Today is the last day of Catherine's life. *The black-and-white crow stole from the cart. She couldn't be outside to shoo it and in the room too.*" (pg. 298) Starling has realized that even the FBI is not infallible; the investigators cannot be everywhere at once. She feels that there is a need for her in this investigation, although no one else has expressed that feeling. Starling knows they need an extra hand to shoo away the crow, and the symbolism of the crow is instrumental in her decision. Meanwhile, the author also elaborates upon the symbolism of the imago by showing Jame Gumb with

the videos of his mother. Jame is captivated by his mother's beauty. This is the image of her, the imago, which he formed as a young child. It is into this image that he seeks to transform.



Chapters 51 - 55

Chapters 51 - 55 Summary

Chapter 51: At his office in Quantico, Crawford's boss asks about the funeral arrangements. Crawford makes it clear that he wants to distract himself with work. Dr. Danielson from Johns Hopkins calls him with a name: John Grant. Grant's psychological tests fit the profile which Lecter gave Starling. Grant applied for gender-altering surgery but had lied about his criminal background, and became violent with one of the doctors. Grant's real name is Jame Gumb.

Chapter 52: Mr. Bimmel escorts Starling upstairs to Frederica's room. The house is filled with junk and the smell of mouse urine. Starling wonders if Frederica had a friend good enough to risk bringing through this mess. Frederica's room is different, well-decorated with inexpensive items and hand-sewn curtains. Starling looks through her high school yearbook and tries to get a sense of the girl's dreams. Starling opens the closet and is surprised to see what nice clothes Frederica owned. She checks the tags and realizes that Frederica made her own clothes; she was a talented seamstress. In the closet, Starling finds a dressmaking pattern outlined on some material. The triangular pattern matches precisely the triangular pattern cut out of Kimberly Emberg's back. In a rush, Starling realizes that Buffalo Bill can sew; Lecter had hinted as much.

Chapter 53: Starling calls Jerry Burroughs at the crime hotline and tells him about Buffalo Bill's sewing talents. He cuts her off to brief her on the situation. The Hostage Rescue Team is already airborne, en route to Calumet City, Illinois, Jame Gumb's last known residence. Crawford wants her to know that the break came because of the psychological profile Starling got from Lecter. Burroughs tells her to stay on the Bimmel angle, because if they don't catch Gumb red-handed with Catherine Martin, they will need more evidence to convict. Starling fights back her disappointment and resolves to follow up on Frederica. From Mr. Bimmel, she obtains the name of Frederica's best friend, Stacy Hubka, and decides to interview her at work.

Chapter 54: Stacy Hubka works at an insurance agency in Belvedere, Ohio. Starling asks her about Frederica's boyfriends, and learns she never really had any. Frederica had done seamstress work with old Mrs. Lippman, because Frederica had been too heavy to be hired on by the retail clothing store downtown. Frederica had admired Stacy's white collar job in the insurance office, remembers Stacy with angry tears. Starling obtains the address of old Mrs. Lippman.

Chapter 55: Meanwhile on an airplane, the Hostage Rescue Team descends towards Calumet City. Team commander Joel Randall directs the action as they touch down at the airport, where local FBI awaits them. Randall's men are provided a Florist's delivery truck and a sledgehammer wrapped in a long flower box.

Chapters 51 - 55 Analysis

Earlier, Dr. Lecter tells Clarice that she is close to the way she will find Buffalo Bill. Lecter guides her along the path of first principles, encouraging her to consider what Buffalo Bill is, and what he does. That logic takes Clarice to Ohio, to the home of Bill's first victim. There, Clarice's feminine sensibilities come into play. She gets a well-rounded picture of Frederica's life by using her internal knowledge of feminine hopes and dreams. Even if the male cops who searched the room previously noticed Frederica made her own clothes, it may not have seemed important to them. Starling understands Frederica, and she understands Buffalo Bill, and is thus able to intuit the meaning of the triangular patches. Starling's insight is the biggest breakthrough in the investigation to date. Or, so she thinks. Her disappointment is bitter when she hears that the FBI found Jame Gumb before she did. Nevertheless, newly convinced of what a valuable asset her gender identity is to the investigation, Starling resolves to continue re-covering the same ground previously covered by the male officers.



Chapters 56 - 61

Chapters 56 - 61 Summary

Chapter 56: James Gumb decides to kill Catherine to save the dog. If he uses a head shot to kill her he will only lose the hair, and Precious is worth that. He grabs his Colt Python and sneaks down to the darkened well with his night vision equipment. He finds "it," as he thinks of Catherine, asleep on its side curled up like a "giant shrimp." (pg. 339) Before he can shoot, Precious hears him and jumps up; Gumb realizes Precious is uninjured and knows Catherine will not hurt the dog. This means he can shoot her in the legs and head without danger to Precious. Gumb turns on all the lights in the basement and heads back to the well to kill Catherine.

Just then, his doorbell rings. He ignores it, and sets up the floodlight by the well. Somebody's really leaning on the bell now, and reluctantly he decides he'd better answer it. He cracks open the front door just enough to see Starling's ID. She asks him about old Mrs. Lippman, and he tells her she's been dead for years. Starling persists, and Gumb invites her in, telling her he has got a business card for Mrs. Lippman's lawyer somewhere inside. As he rummages through a drawer, Starling watches a Death's-head Moth crawl out of the folds of his robe. Realizing her situation, Starling thinks fast, and decides not to take the business card when he holds it out. She asks for a phone, and the moth flies into their line of vision. When her eyes remain on his face instead of following the moth's path, he realizes she knows who he is. She goes for her gun and tells him to freeze. He walks out of the room, then sprints down the basement stairs. A woman's scream echoes up the stairwell. Starling pursues down the stairs, clearing each doorway as she goes. The basement lights are ablaze, and she takes cover behind the well. She leans over and sees Catherine. Trained to calm the hostage, Starling announces that she's FBI and that Catherine is safe.

"Safe SHIT, he's got a gun. Getmeout. GETMEOUT." (pg. 343) Starling tells her to shut up and quiet the dog. Starling knows she cannot leave to get help or Gumb will kill Catherine. "Either she found Gumb, or she made sure he'd fled, or she took Catherine out with her, those were her only choices." (pg. 344) She begins clearing the suite of rooms around the basement, impeded by the mannequins, mirrors, moth cages and other bizarre dycor. She's looking for Gumb, or a rope, or a ladder. She grabs a rope and turns back, when suddenly the lights go out. She listens to the steam hiss of the pipes and Catherine's wails. She heads for the sound of the screams. Gumb watches her through his infrared equipment. He has hunted many women in his basement, but never one with a gun. He would like to play with her, but lacks time. Gumb cocks the Python, and Starling whirls and shoots at the sound. She fires four times and reloads in the darkness. She hears whistling, and realizes Gumb has a sucking chest wound. With his final breath, he asks her how it feels to be so beautiful. She tells Catherine it's all right and leaves to call the authorities. The Belvedere fire department hoists Catherine and the dog out of the well.



Chapter 57: Mapp, Jeff and Crawford meet Starling at the airport in Washington. Crawford hugs her and orders her home to get some sleep. As Jeff drives, Mapp and Starling share a drink in the back of the van. Mapp shares good news: Senator Martin has called off Krendler, and the hearing has been cancelled. Starling's final exams have been delayed until Monday. The final piece of good news is that Pilcher from the Smithsonian has left three messages for Starling.

Chapter 58: Crawford awakens early, his wife's final coherent words on his mind. Back when she still had been able to talk, she had asked him about the state of the lawn. Crawford spends the morning doing yardwork while Bella's parents sleep in the house. Starling shows up and, wordlessly, they watch the TV news together. The press refers to Gumb's basement as a "'Dungeon of Horrors,'" and Starling tenses as she sees the footage. Catherine Martin is reported as dehydrated and bruised, but apart from a broken finger, healthy and rational. Crawford recommends to Starling that she use Senator Martin's gratitude while it lasts. Crawford toys with Lecter's origami chicken and reminds Starling to take precautions whenever she's away from Quantico. Starling agrees to his proposed security measures, but doubts that Lecter would come after her. Lecter would consider that rude, she says. As they part, he attempts to show kindness through his grief. Stiffly, he tells her that her father sees her.

Chapter 59: Jame Gumb's mother had been a month pregnant when she lost the Miss Sacramento contest in 1948. Later, the failed actress had gone into an alcoholic decline; Gumb was placed in foster care by the state of California when he was two. At the age of ten, his grandparents took him home to live with them. He killed them both two years later. He learned to tailor in Vocational Rehabilitation. Raspail's next of kin finally listen to the tapes of Raspail's therapy sessions with Lecter and learn that Gumb killed Raspail's lover, Klaus. Gumb worked for Mrs. Lippman, and Raspail had predicted that Gumb would kill her and steal everything one day. He traveled around the country measuring clients for the custom garments he made through Mrs. Lippman's business, and found his victims that way. They find Frederica's letters to Gumb among his property. Frederica had thought they were in love; she had even written him a note from the pit. The tabloids change his name to Mr. Hide for the name of the clothing label he sewed. *People* magazine does a nice piece on Starling, which includes a picture of the horse she saved, Hannah. The picture is the only thing Starling saves from all the media coverage.

Chapter 60: Ardelia Mapp, front runner for valedictorian, is a great tutor for Starling. During a break in their studies, Starling tells her friend about Pilcher's invitation to the vacation house he shares with his sister and her family on Chesapeake Bay. He's promised Starling her own room, no hassles, and walks on the beach. Starling has accepted the invitation for next weekend.

Chapter 61: At the Marcus Hotel, Lecter receives a bottle of wine from room service. He has altered his face with silicon injections. He's signed up for a South American tour, intending to be herded through customs with a large tour group. Now, he writes the correspondence he will send through a remailing service in London. He sends Barney a generous tip and a thank you note. To Dr. Frederick Chilton, he sends a letter indicating



he will be dropping by soon for a visit. Finally, he writes a note to Clarice Starling. He asks her if the lambs have stopped screaming, and tells her he has no plans to call on her, for the world is a more interesting place with her in it. Far away, on the Chesapeake shore, Clarice slumbers peacefully in a pile of quilts and dogs; the lump underneath the covers may be the sleeping form of Noble Pilcher.

Chapters 56 - 61 Analysis

The imagery of the imago comes full circle, as the author finally reveals the details of Jame Gumb's upbringing. As Lecter explained, the imago is the image of the parent formed by an infant. The image Gumb retains of his mother as a promising beauty queen could only have been formed in infancy, for shortly thereafter she had become an alcoholic; and by the time he was two, he was removed from her custody. Thus, the Death's-head Moth chrysalis is an appropriate symbol for Gumb to have placed on the bodies of the women he killed. Like the imago which emerges from its chrysalis, Gumb had hoped to transform himself into the image of his parent, which he had formed in infancy.



Characters

Clarice Starling

Clarice Starling is the underdog heroine of *The Silence of the Lambs*. She hails from a poverty-ridden rural small town, but grows up in an orphanage after the death of her father. She is intelligent, brave and capable. She wants more out of life than her upbringing might typically have brought her. Yet, although Starling desperately desires to rise above her childhood poverty, she does not turn against her roots, as some young people might. Starling is mature enough to take the valuable lessons and characteristics she learned from her parents and foster parents and make them a part of her guiding philosophy. She is a discerning young woman, who can discard what doesn't suit her about her upbringing and keep what does. For example, rather than hold bitterness towards her mother for sending her away to live with a relative after her father died, Starling instead calls upon the memory of her mother's strength to help her as she processes her first dead body in the rural Potter Funeral Home; "in this place Starling was heir to the granny women, to the wise women, the herb healers, the stalwart country women who have always done the needful, who keep the watch and when the watch is over, wash and dress the country dead." (Chapter 12, pg. 82)

Starling does not let her underprivileged past hold her back, either. She is driven and ambitious, and uses every ounce of intelligence, courage, stamina, and wisdom allotted her to get ahead in the world. She applies that same driving energy to her pursuit of Buffalo Bill. When Section Chief Crawford gives Starling the opportunity to prove herself, Starling takes it further than Crawford could possibly have anticipated, by personally saving a senator's daughter and shooting the serial killer to death in his basement of horrors.

Dr. Hannibal Lecter

Lecter is a fascinating creature devised by the mind of author Thomas Harris as the ultimate killer. Harris blends realistic elements of FBI serial killer profiles with some purely fictional touches to create a man like Lecter. He is brilliant, suave, courteous to a fault, and yet, also a vicious killer who enjoys feeding off the pain of his fellow human beings. Lecter's profile is inspired by the likes of noted real-life serial killer, Ted Bundy. The nation was shocked to learn that Bundy, a charming, intelligent law student on the surface, was in fact a dedicated serial murderer. His arrest gave rise to the chilling belief that trusted white collar professionals, like doctors and lawyers, might be harboring murderous intentions. Lecter's character, a psychiatrist by trade, is largely created in response to that fearful *what if?* As a brilliant analyst who used his patient's confidences to satisfy his own lust for pain, Lecter embodies the fear inspired by Bundy.

However, in real life, Bundy did not and could not have succeeded as a lawyer. He certainly enjoyed law school, with its abundance of young, female students upon whom



Bundy could prey. Yet, his inner world was in a state of constant collapse. Bundy did not possess the mental stability to complete law school, and certainly not to set up a successful practice. Hence, the very idea of Hannibal Lecter as a successful, practicing psychiatrist is unlikely on the surface. Nonetheless, Harris fleshes out his character in such a fascinating manner that the reader voluntarily suspends disbelief. Lecter's deeply ingrained courtesy, combined with his cultured world view and tremendous education, makes him impossible to fully dislike, as the reader cannot quite imagine such a man actually committing heinous crimes. Clarice Starling, who knows Lecter best, suggests that perhaps his indulgence in hideous murders satisfies his cruel streak so totally, that all discourtesy has been purged from him. Lecter can stomach committing murder, but he cannot abide impoliteness.

Jack Crawford

Jack Crawford is the Section Chief of Behavioral Sciences Department at Quantico, and the man responsible for recruiting Clarice Starling into the FBI. *The Silence of the Lambs* was written when FBI profiling, conducted at that time by Behavioral Science, was first beginning to make its mark in the world of law enforcement. Serial killers had long stumped the police, and oftentimes the various murders were committed in different jurisdictions and were not realized to be the work of a single killer. The art of criminal profiling began to show law enforcement an alternate, and successful, way of catching serial killers. Thus, the fact that Crawford and his team had successfully caught three killers is a tremendous track record. Homicide detectives may catch many more murderers over their careers, but serial killers are a different breed. Catching one is the equivalent to solving a dozen murders.

Starling loves Crawford's leadership abilities; he is a strong, intelligent, canny man who enjoys hunting criminals. However, the pressures from the Buffalo Bill case, combined with the slow and agonizing death of Crawford's wife, Bella, have weakened this formerly stalwart warrior. Starling senses his weakness and worries, because she has given him her professional loyalty. Thus, her career status can be irreparably damaged if he is not strong enough to stand up for her. To Crawford's relief, Starling kills Buffalo Bill and gets them both out of hot water with their superiors. However, her success is a testament to Crawford's abilities to choose good people and mentor them as they develop their skills. He is fundamentally the kind of successful, wise and caring leader that every human being hopes to have at the helm.

Jame Gumb, A.K.A. Buffalo Bill

Jame Gumb is described by his few intimate associates as a human void. Gumb has always been violent, having killed his grandparents in cold blood when he was twelve. However, the violence alone, while amusing, never managed to fill the void inside Gumb. One day, Gumb spots a Death's-head Moth and is inspired by the symbolism of change, from pupae to imago. Gumb decides to fill the void in his heart by transforming himself into the image of his long lost mother. An expert tailor, Gumb begins abducting



large-framed women to obtain material for a girl suit. He intends to sew together the hides of his victims, so that he can slip into their skins and literally become a woman.

Dr. Frederick Chilton

Chilton believes he is Lecter's nemesis, but in reality, Chilton is not clever enough to be anyone's nemesis. The best he can manage is to be a major nuisance; he hinders the investigation, while allowing Lecter to make a fool out of him on national television.

Senator Ruth Martin

Senator Martin of Tennessee is the mother of Catherine Martin, Buffalo Bill's latest victim. Martin throws all of her political weight behind the investigation, desperate to get her daughter back alive. Unfortunately, the senator backs Chilton's plan, and winds up working at cross-purposes with the FBI. Martin represents to Starling everything Starling herself wishes to achieve, but never had growing up. Thus, Martin's arrogant dismissal of Starling rankles the young woman.

Catherine Martin

Catherine Martin, daughter of U.S. Senator Ruth Martin, is abducted by the serial killer Buffalo Bill shortly after Starling joins the investigation. Given that Bill usually keeps his victims alive for several days, law enforcement mobilizes quickly to find Buffalo Bill before he kills Catherine. Starling visits Catherine's apartment hoping to find some clue in Catherine's life, which might lead them to Buffalo Bill. Catherine is described by the FBI as a bright underachiever. On the surface, she seems to have little in common with Starling. Starling sees her as a spoiled brat who has thrown away every opportunity her mommy, the senator, has provided. However, Starling reminds herself that even rich kids experience pain, and Catherine's record of underachievement may be a symptom of her own personal pain. Both Starling and Catherine have lost their fathers, and this shared bond motivates Starling to work extra hard to save Catherine's life.

Kimberly Emberg

Kimberly is the first dead body Starling ever sees. Having been raised in a similar environment as Kimberly, Starling feels an emotional connection to the dead girl, which spurs her to hunt Buffalo Bill with great fury.

Frederica Bimmel

Frederica is Jame Gumb's first victim. Gumb played on the romantic hopes of this overweight, poverty-ridden plain-Jane to lure her to her death. Frederica is so convinced



of Gumb's feelings for her that she even writes him a note from the pit, appealing for mercy due to their 'friendship.'

John Brigham

Ex-Marine John Brigham is the firing instructor at Quantico. Like Crawford, Brigham is impressed by Starling's talent and takes an interest in her career. His advice on how to trace Raspail's vehicle helps Starling find Klaus' body. Brigham stands up for Starling when she faces a hearing for professional misconduct. Ardelia Mapp, Starling's roommate, suggests Brigham may have a romantic interest in Starling. Through this, the author explores the nature of male-female relations in a professional setting. Brigham admires Starling, possibly romantically, but this admiration stems from her talent and skill as well as her looks. At no time does Brigham behave unprofessionally or act upon his romantic feelings. Thus, their relationship is appropriate; it is simply a gender-swap version of the mutual admiration male student and teachers often feel for one another, with the added dimension of male-female attraction.



Objects/Places

Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane

A cell in the bowels of this high-security facility is Lecter's home for many years. The director of the hospital, Dr. Frederick Chilton, impedes Starling's investigation at every turn.

Hannibal Lecter's Cell

Lecter's cell in the Baltimore State Hospital has several security features, which most prison cells lack. In addition to the standard steel bars, there is another layer of impregnable netting which encircles the cell just inside the bars, preventing Hannibal from ever reaching through the bars. Since this cell has been Hannibal's home for so long, the walls are covered in gorgeous, detailed drawings of European cathedrals and museums, sketched from memory by Lecter himself.

The Cage

When Lecter is moved from his longtime home in Baltimore, he is moved into a prefabricated cage, built by a company in St. Louis, which is placed on the top floor of the old courthouse in Memphis, Tennessee. Starling examines the cage and finds it suitably strong to hold Lecter. Unfortunately, the guards in Memphis are not as strict as Lecter's guards in Baltimore, and they give Lecter the opening he needs to escape.

Colt Python

Jame Gumb takes pride in this pistol, which he uses to kill several of his victims.

Acherontia styx

Acherontia styx is the classification for the Malaysian Death's-head Moth, which Buffalo Bill likes to leave in his victims' throats. The moth represents transformation to Bill, but to Starling it is a means of tracking and finding the serial killer.

Quantico, West Virginia

Home of the FBI training academy, the base at Quantico also houses the Behavioral Science division. As long as she is at Quantico, Starling is safe from Lecter's reach.



Smithsonian Museum of Natural History

Starling and Crawford take advantage of the expert entomologists employed by this world famous museum to identify the species of bug found lodged in the dead victims' throats. One of the entomologists, Noble Pilcher, becomes Starling's love interest.

Potter Funeral Home

The Potter Funeral Home in Potter, West Virginia, also serves as the morgue for Rankin County. When Buffalo Bill's last victim, Kimberly Jane Emberg, surfaces in the nearby river, her body is brought to the funeral home for forensics processing. While fingerprinting the body, Starling discovers in herself a reserve of strength she didn't know she had, a legacy from her mother.

Blue Canoe

The Blue Canoe is the affectionate term for the old airplane which the FBI uses to shuttle personal back and forth to crime scenes. The twin-engined Beechcraft became FBI property after a Drug Enforcement seizure in the Everglades and has subsequently been retrofitted for better performance.

Split City Storage

Split City is the name of the self-storage facility where Benjamin Raspail's estate is stored during probate. His attorney allows Starling to access the unit, where she finds a partial human corpse stored in Raspail's classic Packard. The sight of Starling keeping the media at bay with a tire iron is unfortunately splashed across the broadcast news in the wake of her discovery.

Social Sensitivity

The Silence of the Lambs, like Red Dragon, centers on the hunt for a serial killer, one of American society's most frightening nightmares. However, this novel emphasizes from the very outset the trials of an intelligent and capable woman, FBI trainee Clarice Starling, in a patriarchal system, and as such should be considered a work with strong feminist sensibilities. Clarice is treated differently from Will Graham, the hero of Red Dragon, and not simply because she is a trainee at the FBI Academy; she is consistently treated with less respect because she is female.

Underlying all Clarice's trials in the novel is the reason for her involvement with the case, the murder spree of the serial killer "Buffalo Bill," who kills and mutilates women so that he can construct a costume of their skins. This combination of female hero and female victims means that The Silence of the Lambs makes a strong point about the victimization of women in our society.

Techniques

The Silence of the Lambs is Harris's most perfectly-realized novel. In its expert use of the omniscient narrator to present the thoughts and emotions of principal characters, in its riveting dialogue, in its psychological acuity, and in its authentic use of police procedure, The Silence of the Lambs is considered by many critics to be a book which ultimately bridges the gap between popular fiction and literary fiction, a book which can be read for enjoyment or reflection. Harris again creates suspense by having his heroes work against a deadline, this time days instead of weeks, and by moving back and forth between the principals of his story, this time weaving in Lecter as a subsidiary storyline to the cat and mouse game between Buffalo Bill and the authorities pursuing him.



Themes

Themes

With the character of Clarice Starling, Harris moves away from his usual emphasis on the similarities between the hunters and the hunted. Unlike Will Graham in *Red Dragon*, who had a strange identification with those he hunted, Clarice's empathy works differently; she does not see things through the eyes of the serial killer who objectifies his victims. Her connection, instead, is to the victims. She goes through the rooms and possessions of the victims to learn more about the women Bill took, to see things through their eyes, and her ability to see through their eyes proves to be the decisive element in locating Buffalo Bill.

The transactions between Hannibal Lecter and Starling also reflect a continuing concern of Harris, the creation of sympathetic and psychologically complex characters of all sorts. Although Lecter originally greets Clarice Starling with malevolent civility, from their first scene meeting, Starling treats Lecter as an authority and perhaps even a teacher, emphasizing his professional title in each conversation, instead of dealing with him as we know many others have, as a case study or a non- (or extra-) human aberration.

Lecter appreciates and reciprocates this courtesy. Whether unconsciously or consciously, Clarice, who knows what it is to be an object, treats Lecter as human rather than object, and the lesson is not lost on him.

Clarice is most concretely Harris's representation of good in the struggle with evil, and perhaps because Clarice's character does not partake of the ambiguity of other Harris heroes, she is the least affected by the evil she combats. She does not lose her life like Kabakov or nearly lose life and sanity, like Will Graham. Although she is not unaffected by the events of the novel, at the conclusion of the novel she has earned the "silence of the lambs," which at least for the time being represents peace.

Ambition

Ambition is Clarice Starling's driving motivation. Starling is proud of her father and mother, and so she never speaks ill of her indigent upbringing. However, the reader learns, through Starling's reactions to the poverty of Frederica Bimmel, just how much Starling hated growing up poor in the country. As Starling looks at the ancient, dusty rubbish piled up in Frederica's home, she wonders if Frederica had a friend good enough to take through that mess. This thought reveals Starling's buried shame about her own upbringing. Being called a rube or a redneck, even by the likes of Lecter, is her worst nightmare. Her desire to leave that rural poverty behind and become a part of the elite power structure at the FBI is intense.

The intensity of this desire prompts her to become a stellar student and an excellent shooter. It also prompts her to take risks, like threatening the news crew with a tire iron



to keep them out of her crime scene. However, Starling tempers her ambition with professional and moral ethics. Had she been interested in sleeping her way to the top, she would've taken Dr. Chilton up on his offer. If she wanted money, she could have stolen from Catherine Martin's home as the senator feared. Neither of those actions is ever even considered by Starling as an option. Her driving ambition will carry her to the top, but she will get there by virtue of strength, talent, skill and devotion.

Desire

The theme of desire in the book is really a theme of human motivation. Humans are motivated by desire, and the strength of the desire often determines the results of the actions it motivates. The various characters have various desires, and Dr. Hannibal Lecter's character provides a voice for this theme. During one of their notable conversations about Buffalo Bill, Lecter tries to get Clarice to look at Bill's motivation. What is the desire that drives him? Clarice and her cohorts at the FBI misread Bill's desire as being sexual lust, or perhaps revenge. Lecter's brilliance is that he understands Bill's desire for what it really is. The key to Buffalo Bill's criminal profile is his desire to look like his mother. Although he wants to be a woman, he is neither transsexual nor homosexual. Bill wishes only to be his mother. Perhaps, he feels it will fill the void that his absent, alcoholic mother left in his life. In any case, his desire to become a woman drives his actions, and by understanding this, Starling is able to follow his trail.

Lecter desires to be admired for his intellect. Crawford understands this and together with Starling, appeals to Lecter's intellectual vanity in order to obtain his help catching Buffalo Bill. When Chilton insults Lecter's vanity by telling him the FBI has played him for a fool, Lecter becomes highly motivated to prove his intellectual superiority by escaping and going after Chilton. His success at this escape is driven by the power of his desire to outsmart law enforcement.

Gender Politics

Gender politics are dealt with in an engaging and thought-provoking manner in *The Silence of the Lambs*. Published in 1988, this theme reflects an era of firsts for women in professions previously restricted to men. Through the latter half of the 1900's, women gained entry into many all-male military colleges, law enforcement training programs, and the U.S. armed forces for the first time in history. Women had been present in these institutions previously only as secretaries, administrative support, or other such supporting roles. The new trailblazers had no role models to follow, and lacked the supportive assistance from leadership which was available to men. Casting Clarice Starling as his protagonist, Thomas Harris has created a fictional role model in a very human and dynamic fashion. He acknowledges the learning process for both men and women, as women take on roles traditionally occupied by men. Clarice teaches Crawford how to lead her, even as he teaches her how to be a successful agent. Instead of pretending there is no gender difference, Clarice keeps an open mind as to



how her feminine perspective may impact her work, for Clarice is learning, too. At the outset of the book, she is afraid her gender will hold her back. However, as she feels her way, with instinct and training, through her first serious investigation, Clarice learns to use her feminine perspective as an asset.



Style

Point of View

The point of view in *The Silence of the Lambs* shifts from character to character, as needed to heighten the drama. Predominantly, the story is told from Starling's first person point of view. However, Starling cannot be present during some of the critical scenes, such as Gumb's abduction of Catherine Martin. Therefore, the author switches to both Catherine's and Gumb's points of view to communicate these vital details. The author's choice to avoid using an omniscient narrative point of view lends to the suspense. By switching the point of view back and forth between the characters, the author makes sure the reader is always more in the know than the investigators. However, it would not serve the author's purpose to give too much away too soon. Thus, he omits the omniscient narrator. By restricting the point of view to the actual knowledge of the characters in the book, the author allows the reader to participate in the detective-work aspects of the story. Additionally, the reader is treated to the dubious treat of being inside Lecter's head. As the method used by Behavioral Science investigators involves trying to step into the mind of a serial killer, the author is able to invite the reader to participate, first hand, in this style of investigation by drawing on the inner working of both Lecter's and Gumb's twisted minds.

Setting

The settings in *The Silence of the Lambs* are critical to conveying the sense of deep and abiding evil, which resides in the story's two serial killers. Hannibal Lecter's home is a cell deep within the bowels of the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. His cell is the very last one at the end of the hall. To reach him, one must venture through the gauntlet of madmen in the adjoining cells. In his cell, Lecter has no control over his external circumstances. His captors are free to torment him with the ceaselessly loud noise of the television, or by leaving all the lights ablaze for days on end. Against this backdrop, Lecter's commanding presence remains undaunted. His ability to conduct himself as host when Clarice visits says a great deal about his personal power.

Jame Gumb does his work in an unearthly suite of rooms in old Mrs. Lippman's basement. It is implied, but never verified, that Gumb has killed his employer, Mrs. Lippman, and stolen both her home and business. In the basement are many walled-off rooms, where Gumb has left the remains of his previous victims. These rooms are filled with lime and reek of the bare earth from which they have been carved. Only the suite of rooms immediately surrounding the basement stairs have running water and electricity, and as Gumb's confidence as a killer has grown, he has abandoned the boarded off rooms in favor of taking his pleasure in the relative comfort of the well-lit rooms near the stairwell. In this area lies the old well, long since run dry, where Gumb imprisons his captives, like Catherine Martin. Here, also, he keeps cages full of his Death's-head



Moths, which he raises himself in tribute to his much anticipated transformation. Ultimately, Clarice Starling must descend into this ghastly setting, called the "Dungeon of Horrors" by the press, to save Catherine and eliminate Jame Gumb once and for all. (Chapter 58, pg. 354)

Language and Meaning

The Silence of the Lambs is a well-researched novel. Author Thomas Harris introduces the reader to many forensics and psychological terms, as well as law enforcement jargon. The jargon is perhaps the most interesting and evocative of the terms used throughout the novel. From Harris, the reader learns that a floater is police slang for a dead body found in a body of water. Bodies generally sink when they are first dumped, and only float to the surface when decomposition gases build up inside the corpse. Law enforcement typically refers to Buffalo Bill's victims as having been skinned, but Lecter, Crawford, and Starling use the more evocative term, flayed. This gruesome jargon helps create a frightening atmosphere for the reader.

The author introduces and explains several psychological terms, as well. Starling quotes Dr. Alan Bloom's book, which defines Lecter as a pure sociopath. When Lecter asks her if she agrees with that classification, Starling says that she is "still waiting for the shallowness of affect," which is one of a sociopath's characteristics. (Chapter 22, pg. 146) This remark pleases Lecter, who certainly doesn't see himself as shallow or affectative. By contrast, Gumb is classified as a sadist, yet the reader learns that a sadist would flay a body for pleasure. Gumb is not a pure sadist, because he doesn't skin his victims merely for fun. He has a definite purpose. Therefore, all of these terms of art employed by the author help the reader to better understand the differences between serial killers' motivations. Such understanding of motivation is the key to how the FBI Behavioral Science Department solves crimes.

Structure

The Silence of the Lambs is divided into sixty-one, predominantly brief, chapters. The author moves back and forth between the individual characters, which together comprise the storyline, checking in on each character's progress as he revisits them, one by one, from chapter to chapter. Most of the chapters are dedicated to Clarice Starling, of course, as she is the protagonist, and also the character who ties all the rest together. Even when author Harris devotes a chapter to Starling, she is often in contact with the other characters, allowing him to further multiple storylines at once.

Fundamentally, there are three storylines in the novel. Starling's quest to prove herself by saving Catherine Martin is the primary storyline. However, within this storyline, the author encompasses the story of Clarice and Lecter, which unfolds as an interpersonal drama closely linked to the events of the major plotline. The third storyline is actually the story of James Gumb, or Buffalo Bill, as he is known in the press. While the central focus of the novel is Starling's search for Buffalo Bill, his story nonetheless unfolds

independently. His whereabouts and identity are unknown to the public and law enforcement until the very end of the novel. The reader, however, is privy to his storyline, if not the details of his precise location. The stories eventually intersect in a climactic showdown in which Starling saves the day.



Quotes

"Do you know what you look like to me, with your good bag and your cheap shoes? You look like a rube. You're a well-scrubbed, hustling rube with a little taste. Your eyes are like cheap birthstones - all surface shine when you stalk some little answer. And you're bright behind them, aren't you? Desperate not to be like your mother. Good nutrition has given you some length of bone, but you're not more than one generation out of the mines, *Officer Starling*." Chapter 3, pg. 22

"Starling felt pretty good. She knew Crawford was just giving her an exhausted mouse to bat around for practice. But he wanted to teach her. He wanted her to do well. For Starling, that beat courtesy every time." Chapter 6, pg. 32

"And all the time the men were talking to her, constantly, gently. 'We won't touch anything. We're pros, you don't have to worry. The cops will let us in anyway. It's all right, honey. Their cozening backseat manner put her over. She ran to the bumper jack at the end of the door and pumped the handle. The door came down two inches, with a grinding screech. She pumped it again. Now the door was touching the man's chest.'" Chapter 8, pg. 55

"Now Starling found herself in a curious state in which she could not be surprised. For a day and a night she'd felt suspended in a diver's ringing silence. She intended to defend herself, if she got the chance." Chapter 10, pg. 65

"There were no handles on the inside of the rear doors in the cruiser, as Starling discovered when the driver and Crawford got out and started toward the back of the funeral home. She had to bat on the glass until one of the deputies beneath the tree saw her, and the driver came back red-faced to let her out." Chapter 12, pg. 79

"Starling felt the urge to say something before they zipped up the bag, to make a gesture or express some kind of commitment. In the end, she just shook her head and got busy packing the samples into her case." Chapter 12, pg. 88

"The fingerprint card Starling had assembled was barely dry. 'Load it, Starling, you've got the nimble fingers.' *Don't smear it* was what he meant, and Starling didn't. It was hard, wrapping the glued-together composite card around the little drum while six wire rooms waited around the country." Chapter 12, pg. 89

"Crawford did a lot of handshaking, passing out cards with the National Crime Information Center hotline number. Starling was interested to see how fast he got them into a male bonding mode. They sure would call up with anything they got, they sure would. You betcha and much oblige. Maybe it wasn't male bonding, she decided; it worked on her too." Chapter 12, pg. 90

"We rarely get to prepare ourselves in meadows or on graveled walks; we do it on short notice in places without windows, hospital corridors, rooms like this lounge with its



cracked plastic sofa and Cinzano ashtrays, where the café curtains cover blank concrete. In rooms like this, with so little time, we prepare our gestures, get them by heart so we can do them when we're frightened in the face of Doom. Starling was old enough to know that; she didn't let the room affect her." Chapter 24, pg. 159

"She wondered what Catherine was doing when they came and told her that her father was dead, of a heart attack at forty-two. Starling was positive Catherine missed him. Missing your father, the common wound, made Starling feel close to this young woman. Starling found it essential to like Catherine Martin because it helped her to bear down." Chapter 34, pg. 208

"All of Buffalo Bill's victims were women, his obsession was women, he lived to hunt women. Not one woman was hunting him full time. Not one woman investigator had looked at every one of his crimes. Starling wondered if Crawford would have the nerve to use her as a technician when he had to go look at Catherine Martin. Bill would 'do her tomorrow,' Crawford predicted. *Do her. Do her. Do her.* 'Fuck this,' Starling said aloud and put her feet on the floor." Chapter 47, pg. 292

"Starling on the floor, flash-blind, ears ringing, deafened by the blast of the guns. She worked in the dark while neither could hear, dump the empties, tip it, feel to see they're all out, in with the speedloader, feel it, tip it down, twist, drop it, close the cylinder." Chapter 56, pg. 347

Adaptations

The 1991 adaptation of *The Silence of the Lambs* directed by Jonathan Demme became one of the most talked-about films of the year and one of the most critically-successful of all time, winning Academy Awards in five major categories including Best Film and Best Screenplay. Anthony Hopkins's portrayal of Hannibal Lecter justifiably made him a household word, while Jodie Foster won her second Academy Award for her sensitive turn as Clarice Starling. Although the film differs little from Harris's novel, Demme, Foster, and screenwriter Ted Tally take the book as a starting point and then go beyond it to reinforce the idea that women must be seen as people rather than objects. By accenting Starling's harassment, by removing male helpers present in the novel, and by stressing Starling's resistance to the attempts of men to objectify her, the film creates, in Foster's words, an "incredibly strong feminist hero" as well as an even stronger statement about the various forms of female victimization in our society.

An abridged version of the novel is available as a book on tape from Simon & Schuster. The reading by Kathy Bates is as powerful in its immediacy as the film adaptation and has the benefit of retaining much of Harris's actual language.



Key Questions

In this, Harris's most popular novel, we find many of his trademarks: psychological insight, the inclusion of authenticating details, and villains who genuinely frighten us. Discussion on any of Harris's works might consider his penchant for humanizing the inhuman, for suggesting the depths of good and evil in each of us, and for arguing that although good may triumph over evil it often does so only at great cost.

In *The Silence of the Lambs*, specific areas of interest include Harris's creation of a strong female protagonist, his psychological insight into major characters as diverse as Jame Gumb, Catherine Baker Martin, and Clarice Starling, and the strange appeal of Dr.

Hannibal Lecter.

1. Why does Hannibal Lecter capture our interest so strongly? What qualities of his character are so intriguing?

2. This novel suggests that the question of evil is problematical in connection with individuals like Jame Gumb.

Do you believe that any societal or personal factors can explain such monstrous evil? Are any such explanations advanced for Lecter?

3. In what ways does the film version of *The Silence of the Lambs* seem to you to be superior to the novel? In what ways inferior?

4. Does Jack Crawford's character seem to differ in any ways from his portrayal in *Red Dragon*? Does he treat his chief investigators, Graham and Starling any differently? What are the implications of these differences?

5. In what ways does Starling have to deal with sexism and prejudice because she is a woman in a traditionally male world?

6. Why does Lecter talk to Starling?

What about her character appeals to him? And why does he tell her he has no plans to call on her, "the world being more interesting with you in it"?

7. How does the character of Dr.

Chilton come to stand for male arrogance and incompetence?

8. Are the serial killers in *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* similar in any ways? Which do you find more horrifying? Why?



9. How does Clarice Starling's empathy serve her better than the technology of the law enforcement agencies tracking Gumb? What clues does she discover that male agents might have missed?



Topics for Discussion

In Chapter 3, Lecter paints an unflattering portrait of Starling's life. Later, she admits that some aspects of this portrait are accurate. From your point of view, how much of what Lecter said was true, or contains some truth?

Lecter often seems to be fishing for a particular reaction when he asks personal questions. What reaction does he seek, and why?

Explain how the psychological concept of the imago parallels the physical changes of a moth. How does this relate to Jame Gumb?

Describe how Starling's awareness of her personal bias helps her solve the crime.

Discuss how de-personifying and objectifying women relates to violence against women, using examples from the story.

Give three ways in which Starling's gender is an asset to the investigation.

Does Starling's gender, at any point in the investigation, become a liability? Explain your answer using specific details from the story.

Literary Precedents

In *The Silence of the Lambs*, Harris creates a perfect combination of the detective and horror novels: We want Clarice Starling to solve the crime, and at the same time, we do not want her to come in contact with Buffalo Bill.

The tension created by these diametrically opposed forces makes for a delicious unease.

Hannibal Lecter, as portrayed in this novel, is built even further into a sort of ultimate and insoluble evil like that of Fu Manchu in the novels of Sax Rohmer or Dr. Moriarty in the Sherlock Holmes tales of Arthur Conan Doyle.

More than a fit nemesis for Starling, who knows she survives on the strength of Lecter's courtesy, Dr. Lecter is the embodiment of rational evil, an even more frightening prospect than the psychotic evil represented by Buffalo Bill.



Related Titles

The development of Hannibal Lecter into one of the great fictional villains sets this book apart from *Red Dragon*, where Lecter first appears. Of the other characters common to both novels, Jack Crawford, head of the Behavior Science division which tracks serial killers, has a considerably more important role in *The Silence of the Lambs*, both as Starling's mentor and as a husband dealing with the death of his wife.

Like *Red Dragon*, this novel shows Harris moving in a decidedly more literary direction, with epigrams, literary references, and archetypal characters who achieve both personal and symbolic significance. Given this movement in his work, the competent writer of thrillers who produced *Black Sunday* (1975) is long gone, replaced by a writer of great sensitivity and style who just happens to know how to weave a great thriller.



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